

**MASTER PLAN
OPEN SPACE AND
RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT**

**BOROUGH OF GIBBSBORO
CAMDEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**



**PLANNING BOARD
BOROUGH OF GIBBSBORO
_____, 2020**

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT

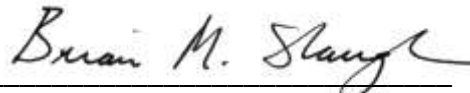
BOROUGH OF GIBBSBORO COUNTY OF CAMDEN

ADOPTED

_____, 2020

Pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28b(7) and –(8)*
An Element of the Master Plan

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Open Space and Recreation Plan Element

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Borough of Gibbsboro has undertaken a program over the past several decades of preserving significant natural resources that protect its environmentally sensitive lands and linking them together with areas for active and passive recreation. Gibbsboro calls this its Greenway Network.

Beginning with the initial acquisitions for the Hilliards Creek Wildlife Refuge, the concept of an interconnected system of stream corridors with the seven man-made lakes of Gibbsboro has expanded to encompass the entire municipality. It included not only the many stream corridors in the Borough, but its historic stagecoach trail, Old Egg Harbor Road, remnants which are still visible today.

The impetus behind the creation of the Greenway Network is Gibbsboro's unique location at the headwaters of the Cooper River. It is also the westernmost expression of the Pinelands vegetative habitat. Associated with the headwaters are extensive areas of wetlands which occupy fully one-third of Gibbsboro's land mass. As documented in the Borough's Natural Resource Inventory, Gibbsboro contains one of the larger concentrations of Swamp Pink (*Helonius bellata*), a federally threatened species, in its natural range along the eastern seaboard. A freshwater wetlands plant, Swamp Pink is sensitive to the quality of water. Open space acquisition protects this water quality.

The acquisition of land for open space purposes has been supported by the residents of Gibbsboro. In 2001, after earmarked taxes for open space were allowed by state law, voters approved 3 to 1 the imposition of an open space tax of up to two cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. Additional land acquisition is proposed in this plan that is intended to be linked to the Old Egg Harbor Trail in the northeast quadrant of the Borough. With this Plan update, the borough proposes to acquire two additional properties in the northeast quadrant of the municipality for open space purposes supporting the Old Egg Harbor Trail and the Greenway Network.

This Open Space and Recreation Plan constitutes the recreation plan element and the open space portion of the conservation plan element of the municipal master plan.

INTRODUCTION

The Open Space and Recreation Plan Element is one of the elements that comprise the municipal Master Plan for development and redevelopment. Open space is an increasingly valuable community asset, in that it provides opportunities for recreation, land for the preservation of wildlife habitats and other natural environments, a protective buffer along sensitive waterways, a gathering place for community events, and visual relief from urbanization. Setting aside land for these purposes also supports property values.

Open space includes active recreation, passive recreation, and conservation areas. If the protected area is large enough, it often encompasses all three types of open space. Active recreation areas satisfy the needs of organized sports that usually require specialized fields or equipment. Passive recreation includes less formal activities or sports, such as bird watching, bicycle riding and hiking. Conservation areas are intended to be left in their natural state for wildlife refuges, as buffers between developments or to protect environmentally sensitive land. In Gibbsboro, all three types of public open space are found.

This Element of the Master Plan of the Borough describes the existing municipally owned open space and supports the linear system known as the Gibbsboro Greenway Network. In addition to being an element of the Master Plan, this document also serves as the Open Space and Recreation Plan required for participation in the New Jersey Green Acres Planning Incentive Grant Program and for participation in the Sustainable Jersey program.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR OPEN SPACE

The main goal of the Open Space and Recreation Element is to integrate the three types of open space into a comprehensive plan of greenways, called the Greenway Network, to protect the headwaters of the Cooper River watershed and by so doing advance the opportunities for the general public to enjoy the significant natural resources preserved within Gibbsboro. Accordingly, most of the land is in conservation and passive recreation, rather than in active recreation facilities. Furthermore, the Borough lacks the financial capability of providing more extensive active recreation facilities because of its small population and modest municipal budget. The continued goal to acquire parcels to add to the Greenway Network and preserve the watershed areas was articulated in previous Conservation Plan and Recreation Plan Elements and remains pertinent today. Towards that end, this Plan sets the following policies for open space:

- I. The critical natural features and resources of Gibbsboro should be protected, to maintain the ecosystem at the headwaters of the Cooper River.

2. A Greenway Network should be implemented to preserve the critical natural resources of Gibbsboro by connecting existing and planned open space parcels with paths and trails.
3. The Greenway Network should be the primary organizing feature for land use policy and to distinguish between different intensities of land development.
4. Open space for conservation and recreational purposes should be acquired or preserved by utilizing both public and private efforts, as appropriate, through a variety of different legal means.
5. Adequate active recreation facilities should be maintained by the Borough and citizen volunteers.
6. Open space acquisition is also intended to protect historic resources in the Borough.
7. A road-based bicycle lane system should be developed to complement the Greenway Network path system as an alternate means of linking open space.

This last goal deserves additional discussion because of its collaborative nature and interest in the development of alternative recreational facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians. Interest in connecting to the bicycle route portions of the Greenway Network from Voorhees Township and Lindenwold has resulted in a more comprehensive system beyond the boundaries of the Borough. For example, Lindenwold preserved Lake Worth in 2001 and created a bicycle connection for access, and in 2003 Voorhees voters followed Gibbsboro to approve by referendum an open space tax that has been and will be used for the development of additional bikeway elements to connect to the Borough's system. In 2015, the Camden County Planning Board adopted a bicycle and multi-use path element of its master plan that incorporated Gibbsboro's plan into its county-wide planning for a trail system.

These goals and policies are designed to provide for the long term recreation and open space needs of the citizens of Gibbsboro, landowners, and visitors to the Borough and may be viewed as part of overall regional and statewide strategies that are complementary.

LAND USE PLANNING AND OPEN SPACE GOALS

The Municipal Land Use Law grants municipalities the authority to develop Master Plans and zoning, development and design ordinances, which can partially address the community's open space and recreation needs. The Zoning Ordinance can be used to encourage a developer to cluster housing, thereby providing open space areas that benefit the development and help fulfill the open space goals of the town. The Zoning Ordinance can also be used to set the type and quantity of playground and recreational

equipment required for the subdivision. Gibbsboro has also adopted a Tree Protection Ordinance that establishes protections for large trees and sets reforestation guidelines to replace trees that must be removed. Finally, the Borough has implemented an historic district to manage development in older sections of town. This has proved to be an effective tool in blending new commercial development around the Paint Works with established neighborhoods. In using these land-planning tools, which are under the direct control of the Borough, both recreation and open space are provided as a product of housing development at virtually no cost to the taxpayer.

Clearly, the implementation of creative land-use planning techniques is the most cost-effective and easiest means of providing for the accumulation of appropriate recreation/open space facilities, but it is dependent on the private sector bringing forth plans for development.

While a significant amount of Gibbsboro's recreation and open space needs have been satisfied through land planning strategies and techniques and will continue to be met via this vehicle, it should be recognized that the town's needs will not be fully realized without the expenditure of both its funds and other public money. Gibbsboro should continue to seek out funding for the development of its open space network and recreational facilities.

By creating this element of the Gibbsboro Master Plan and working closely with developers of vacant land, Gibbsboro has and can, in the process of land subdivision and site development planning and review, directly influenced the size, shape and quality of open space that is preserved. Further, considering the municipality's recreational needs at large in relationship to a well developed plan can direct developers' resources in a direction that is consistent with the overall needs of the community. A significant portion of Gibbsboro's vision has been realized through proactive planning. Hence, the goal of the Open Space and Recreation Element is not to preclude development but rather to influence it by effectively planning for open space and recreation instead of addressing the needs of the community long after the municipality has fully developed and the opportunities are lost.

MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE

In this section of the Plan, an inventory of the various types of dedicated open space is listed and a description of the available facilities.

The Borough currently owns 168.29 acres of open space dedicated for recreation and conservation purposes. There are no county or state facilities in the Borough and no non-profit ownership of land for open space purposes. Table 1 lists the municipally owned sites and provides a general description of the recreational facilities or other uses present at each open space parcel. The locations of municipal open space sites are

shown on the Current Open Space and Parcels for Acquisition map, found at the end of this document.

Table 1. Municipally Owned Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI).

| Map No. | Name of Site | Block | Lot(s) | Facilities/Character | Acres |
|-------------|--|-------|---|---|--------|
| 1 | Nicholson Branch (Samost Tract) | 1.01 | 1.02 | Conservation | 36.70 |
| 2 | Cricket Field | 7.01 | 16.01, 16.02 | Baseball and Softball fields | 7.53 |
| 3 | Schlosser Tract (Old Egg Harbor Rd. Trail) | 17 | 1.01 | Passive Open Space; Trail | 0.10 |
| 4 | Agostini Tract (Old Egg Harbor Rd. Trail) | 18.03 | 11 | Passive Open Space; Trail | 0.21 |
| 5 | American Legion Memorial | 4 | 1 | Passive Open Space | 0.15 |
| 6 | Lucas Park | 5 | 1.02 | Passive Open Space | 0.19 |
| 7 | Heritage Village | 59.05 | 24 | Conservation | 4.41 |
| 8 | Hilliards Creek Wildlife Refuge | 58.01 | 1.01, 2.02, 2.03, 6.01, 7.01, 9.08, 10, 11.02, 12.01, 13.01 | Conservation | 46.51 |
| 9 | Lauer Park | 64 | 1- 4 | Playground, Conservation | 3.19 |
| 10 | Steiner Tract | 42 | 1.02 | Conservation | 11.40 |
| 11 | Blueberry Hill Conservation Area | 42 | 11 | Conservation; Passive Open Space; Trail | 57.90 |
| TOTAL ACRES | | | | | 168.29 |

Block and Lot Corrections

The ROSI at the state level includes Block 64, Lot 53 as part of Lauer Park. Lot 53 was consolidated with Lot 2 when the tax maps were redrawn. All of the lots in Block 64 are part of Lauer Park, but Lot 53 as a separate tax lot has been eliminated. With regard to the Blueberry Hill Conservation Area, the Borough acquired a portion of Lot 13.01 from Tri-Boro Sand and Stone in 2009 and it was consolidated with Lot 11. The remaining portion of Lot 13.01 was retained by Tri-Boro and is part of their ongoing sand mining operation on this property. Consequently, Lot 13.01 has not been included in the ROSI.

Description of Municipal Facilities

The eleven open space parcels in Table 1 are described below (the name of each park is followed by its map location number):

NICHOLSON'S BRANCH – SAMOST TRACT (PASSIVE/CONSERVATION) – ROSI MAP KEY 1

Nicholson's Branch is a tributary to the South Branch of the Cooper River. Its protection is important to water quality for Cooper River. Named the Samost Tract for the donor on the ROSI, it consists of 36.7 acres of open space located between Winding Way and the Borough's western border with Voorhees Township. The lot was a part of the former Laurel Oak Golf Course that closed in the late 1980s. The lot is adjacent to conservation areas in Voorhees Township and its dedicated public open space.

CRICKET FIELD (ACTIVE/HISTORIC) – ROSI MAP KEY 2

The Cricket Field is the main active recreation facility in the Borough. The name comes from its initial use as a place to play the game of cricket, popular in the latter half of the 19th century. It is 7.53 acres in area. The field itself was developed by John Lucas as a recreation facility for his workers at the Lucas Paint Works. The field was surrounded by a sulky track which is visible in historic aerial photographs. The cricket field and horse track were eventually cut in half by the relocation of County Rt. 561 in the 1930s and the northern half is no longer used for recreation. The Cricket Field includes a baseball field and a softball field.

SCHLOSSER TRACT (PASSIVE) – ROSI MAP KEY 3

The Schlosser Tract was a right-of-way vacation and land donated with the development of The Castle subdivision in the early 1990s. This small 0.10 acre parcel allowed for the creation of a crossing of the Old Egg Harbor stage coach line from N. United States Avenue and Alton Avenue in Voorhees. It allowed for the vacation of the right-of-way of Old Egg Harbor Road for the retention of this historic resource in the Borough and conversion to a trail. It links up with the Agostino Tract.

AGOSTINO TRACT (PASSIVE) – ROSI MAP KEY 4

Consisting of 0.21 acres, this property was acquired by the Borough from the adjacent property owner to provide for a wider trail on the Old Egg Harbor right-of-way. This property is next to the Tanglewood neighborhood.

AMERICAN LEGION MEMORIAL (PASSIVE) – ROSI MAP KEY 5

The American Legion Memorial occupies a central triangle in the Borough commemorating the bravery of men and women who fought in wartime. The

memorial is located at the intersection of Kirkwood Road, Clementon Road and Foster Avenue. It includes a flag and monument to veterans and is also the site of a tribute to Albert Lucas, son of John Lucas, who figured prominently in the history and development of the town.

LUCAS PARK (PASSIVE) – ROSI MAP KEY 6

Lucas Park is adjacent to the American Legion Memorial on the east side of Foster Avenue at the former location of the Gibbsboro Lyceum. By the 1960's the Lyceum had fallen into disrepair and was demolished.

In 1999, a gazebo was donated to the park by Ellen Egan in memory of her husband Thomas. The gazebo has been situated in the center of the park and is now a favored site for wedding parties.

HERITAGE VILLAGE (CONSERVATION) – ROSI MAP KEY 7

Heritage Village is an active adult community neighborhood developed as a cluster development. The Borough acquired land along Hilliards Creek for its Greenway Network in the early 1990s. The land also preserves an Eastern Woodland culture site where artifacts were found as part of a phase II investigation required as part of the development process. This property is 4.41 acres.

HILLIARD'S CREEK WILDLIFE REFUGE (PASSIVE/CONSERVATION) – ROSI MAP KEY 8

The Hilliard's Creek Wildlife Refuge contains the first open space parcels acquired by Gibbsboro and encompasses a significant portion of Hilliards Creek between Clementon and Hilliards Roads, paralleling Kirkwood Road to the south. The New Jersey Green Acres Program funded much of the acquisition, with the last Green Acres funded parcel acquired in 1994. The land area of the refuge encompasses 33.35 acres.

The Hilliards Creek is a part of the Cooper River watershed and feeds the South Branch of the Cooper River at Kirkwood Lake. Hilliards Creek is an important wildlife resource, flood control area, and natural wetlands expanse providing important water quality benefits. A nature trail runs through the western most part of the refuge and a guidebook is available that contains descriptions of many of the indigenous trees contained in the refuge. In 1997 a small open-air amphitheater was built for use for lectures on the ecology of the refuge and other environmental topics.

LAUER PARK (ACTIVE AND CONSERVATION) – ROSI MAP KEY 9

A little more than three acres in size, PFC Joseph Lauer Park consists of a playground and a wooded conservation area occupying the entire block between Hilliards,

Norcross, Oakdale and North Roads (Oakdale and North Roads are paper streets). It is located in the Terrace neighborhood of Gibbsboro.

STEINER TRACT (CONSERVATION) – ROSI MAP KEY 10

In early 2002 Gibbsboro acquired the 11.4-acre Steiner tract that fronts on Berlin Road using Green Acres funds. One of the Cooper River's branches, Green Briar Branch (also known as Honey Branch) flows through the property.

BLUEBERRY HILL CONSERVATION AREA (PASSIVE/CONSERVATION) – ROSI MAP KEY 11

Blueberry Hill is a geographical feature that is the highest point in Gibbsboro. From this vista, the skyline of Philadelphia can be seen. This land was acquired from Tri-Boro Sand and Stone by land transfer and donation. The original Lot 11 was transferred to the Borough in the mid-1990s and the remainder, part of Lot 13.01, was subdivided and purchased by the exercise of an option as part of a settlement agreement in 2009. The lots were consolidated into Lot 11. The park area now totals 57.9 acres. Subsequently, the Borough constructed the Blueberry Hill Trail on the property and had assistance from a Scout seeking his Eagle Badge. This trail has become the most popular biking and pedestrian trail in Camden County over the past decade.

DETERMINING OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION NEEDS

The State of New Jersey has identified the Balanced Land Use Concept as the best method for estimating the amount open space required for recreation. This approach identifies the recreation and open space needs that will result from the development of all land *except* slopes of 12% and greater, wetlands, low density areas of the Pinelands and federal and state-owned open space, henceforth defined as developable area. As such, it is a good tool for establishing public land acquisition or total open space preservation in the long term and takes into account demand for recreational facilities generated by development. The Balanced Land Use Guidelines for recreational open space have set a minimum threshold of 7% of total developable land of the county and 3% for each municipality. Of the 168.29 acres of land in the Borough's ROSI about 98 acres are developable. The Borough's developable land is about 796 acres. Comparing the two developable land areas, Gibbsboro developable open space is about 12.1% of its developable acreage. Consequently, Gibbsboro's ROSI is already above the minimum municipal suggested open space percentage.

While the Borough has met the Balanced Land Use Concept goal for open space and recreation, Gibbsboro is a small community of only 1,375 acres and it is reasonable for communities the size of Gibbsboro to have open space needs that total a higher percentage of land area. Community parks, for example, should be a minimum size regardless of the area of the municipality. Gibbsboro would not be able to achieve its goals for protection of environmentally sensitive lands, active recreation and passive

recreation by adhering to this minimum percentage. An added observation is that Camden County is deficient in the amount of open space under its jurisdiction. The County consists of 145,468 acres and its park system (including riparian rights) has 2,640 acres of land.¹ This equals only 1.8% of its land area. Though the County set a goal of acquiring an additional 2,000 acres (which it has not met), it would need to increase its holdings by a factor of four to meet the Balanced Land Use percentages. Gibbsboro is already a regional draw because of its bikeway and hiking trails. The Needs Analysis, which is discussed in the following section, indicates that much of the need is in the continued development of the trails system and adding important parcels to the Greenway Network. In this manner, preserving more land at the municipal level aids in the overall goal of open space preservation on a regional level.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Gibbsboro has had a stable or declining population because of very limited development over the past 50 years. In 1990, the population was 2,383 and the 2018 estimate is 2,228, a decline of 6.6%. The population is also aging along with the rest of the state and nation. Gibbsboro, being a small municipality, has natural connections with Voorhees Township, which surrounds it on three sides as well as being the location of the two municipalities' joint high school, Eastern Regional. There are recreational opportunities for the school-aged population as part of the educational system. Recreational needs are thus stable for youth sports and there is limited scope for expansion in Gibbsboro, but that is not necessary to address demand. Passive recreation needs such as hiking and biking trails for adults is increasing along with the aging of the population and a change in more active to more passive pursuits. Thus the needs analysis points to passive recreation as the focus of this Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Maintenance of existing facilities is good, with all active recreation areas well maintained. There is no broken equipment and the grass and shrubbery is regularly cut and trimmed. Trail maintenance is also good with the assistance of volunteers.

The Borough led a public information session on July 27, 2020 to gather input into the plan. Due to health restrictions, this session was conducted remotely. The meeting was publicly noticed in the newspaper of record and posted on the Borough's website. Public input consisted of the following comments on open space and recreation in Gibbsboro:

- I. The bikeway system is an asset to the municipality and should be maintained and extended to all of the neighborhoods in town.

¹ - *Camden County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Plan*, DVRPC, May 2004

2. Blueberry Hill at the high point of Gibbsboro and an overlook of the Philadelphia skyline, is being overgrown and the view lost.
3. Silver Lake needs to be maintained.²

The members of the public who participated expressed general satisfaction with the level of recreational opportunities and the balance of open space to development in the Borough.

In addition, on October 20, 2020 the Planning Board held a public hearing on the adoption of the Open Space and Recreation Plan element as a part of the municipal Master Plan. Both sessions were publicly advertised in accordance with the guidance issued by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and, in the case of the Planning Board hearing, the Municipal Land Use Law.

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

The Borough encompasses most of the headwaters of the Cooper River. Numerous tributaries in Gibbsboro feed the river. These include Nicholson Branch, White Sand Branch, Green Briar Branch, Honey Run, Slab Cabin Branch, and Hilliards Creek. In addition, Silver Lake and Clements Lake intercept water in the drainage basin from Voorhees and channel flow to Hilliards Creek and White Sand Branch, respectively. These areas have long been identified as environmental resources, starting with the first planning document: the 1985 Conservation Element and Natural Resource Inventory adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the master plan. The master plan element had been preceded by the creation in the zoning ordinance of a Conservation District that functions as an overlay to preserve stream corridors. This was first adopted in 1977 and then substantially amended in 1986 based on the findings and recommendations of the Conservation Element passed the prior year. These documents identified the need for preservation of stream corridors.

As part of the first and second state plans, the Borough's stream corridors were acknowledged as "critical environmental sites" (CES) by the New Jersey State Planning Commission. The CES designation was the State Planning Commission's means of identifying resources for protection that did not meet their one square mile standard for mapping it as a Planning Area 5 – Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area.

In addition, the Historic Preservation Element, adopted in 1994, identified Old Egg Harbor Road, which separates Gibbsboro from Voorhees Township along its northern boundary, as an historic resource. The Borough subsequently vacated as much of the right-of-way as possible and created a bicycle path and trail on the former stagecoach road.

Gibbsboro has limited financial resources. The Borough's 2020 levy on property is slated to raise only \$2.2 million in taxes, which represents 65% of the total budget.

² - Silver Lake, though a centralizing element at the center of the Borough, is privately owned with the lake path around its circumference located in a public access easement.

Notwithstanding these meager resources, the Borough has still been able to provide \$100,000 for buildings and grounds that allows it to maintain the land that it owns. The Borough is able to do a lot with a little by focusing on creating a trail system within its Greenway Network instead of grassy parks with recreational equipment that require a higher degree of maintenance.

The Borough also sees an opportunity arising from an environmental problem. From the 1850s to 1978, Gibbsboro was a factory town centered on the production of paint. This left a legacy of pollution that is being remediated in five separate actions by the USEPA, funded by Sherwin-Williams, the largest paint manufacturer in the United States and the final owner of the Borough's paint-manufacturing industrial complex. Part of the remediation will be the dredging of Hilliards Creek, which will necessitate clearing land on both banks. The Borough anticipates that the clearing will allow the installation of a bikeway/trail through an area of the town that is not readily accessible, though it does have a trailhead on Kirkwood road that loops through the woods today.

The resources needed to create future connections, and make acquisitions to further the preservation of the stream corridors and the bicycle and hiking trails, along with high points to maintain vistas, are discussed and ranked in the Table 2 and the Action Plan section of this plan.

ACTION PLAN

Following is a priority ranking of projects for creating or enhancing open space and recreation, summarized from internal discussions and public hearings about the direction and scope of municipal lands.

Table 2. Gibbsboro Open Space and Recreation Action Plan.

| Priority | Recommendation | Rationale | Category |
|-----------------|---|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Acquire high priority parcels. Seek out partners to potentially provide preservation funding of key tracts. | These parcels are important to expand sections of the Greenway and protect Old Egg Harbor Rd. where important vistas exist; willing sellers. | Acquisition |
| 2 | Create an "Easement and Lands Management Plan" and establish a procedure for regular inspection of easements, public open space, and other lands. | This is a best practice to ensure that public lands are properly maintained and are not inappropriately used. This also aligns with Sustainable Jersey objectives. | Open Space Planning |
| 3 | Convert crushed stone bikeway trails near the Berlin Road cul-de-sac and along the United States Avenue Trail to porous concrete. | Improve safety, reduce erosion and maintenance. | Trails |

| Priority | Recommendation | Rationale | Category |
|----------|---|---|------------------------|
| 4 | Connect the bikeway along Lakeview Drive (C.R. 561) from the Continental Plaza toward Eastwick Drive at the current terminus. | Provides safe route for school children/ bike/ pedestrians to a crossing guard and connects to center of town. (Safety concern: There is no shoulder along Lakeview Drive.) | Trails |
| 5 | Connect Gibbsboro School/Municipal Complex to Lambert Lane, Fire Hall, Hidden Woods and Lambert Lane. Potential project following Sherwin Williams remediation. | Connects neighborhoods and provides a safe route to school for children. | Trails |
| 6 | Extend bikeway/sidewalk along Haddon Avenue from the Brandywine townhouses to Lucas Boulevard. | Connects Gibbsboro School to Cricket Field Athletic Complex and provides a safe route to school for some children. | Trails |
| 7 | Connect future Hilliards Creek Trails to Clementon Road. Potential project following Sherwin Williams remediation. | Extends Bikeway/Trail System | Trails |
| 8 | Connect the United States Avenue Bikeway to Clementon Road at the Clementon Road Pump Station. | Extends Bikeway/Trail System | Trails |
| 9 | Develop bikeway/trails in remote areas on sewer easements to provide recreation opportunities. | Priority trails: Berlin Road to Lakeview Drive; East Road to Pine Road. | Trails |
| 10 | Connect Windsor, Woodhaven, Kirkwood Road @Hilliards, and Kirkwood Park via Samost Tract. (Requires acquisition of part of Block 1.01 Lot 1.01) | Establishes all-encompassing vision and extends Bikeway/Trail System throughout town. | Acquisition/ Trails |
| 11 | Extend bikeway/sidewalk along Hilliards Road to Fire Hall and Lauer Park. | Establishes all-encompassing vision and extends Bikeway/Trail System throughout town. | Trails |
| 12 | Look for opportunities to complete the western side of the Lakeview Drive Bikeway from Project Freedom to Laurel Oak Road in Voorhees Township. | Extends Bikeway/Trail System (Safety concern: There is no shoulder along Lakeview Drive.) | Trails |
| 13 | Evaluate the need for additional recreation areas, especially playgrounds for children. For example, playground equipment could be deployed at Cricket | If budgetary limits allow, additional playgrounds could be constructed at existing parks. Likely to require more personnel. | Recreation |

| Priority | Recommendation | Rationale | Category |
|----------|--|--|----------|
| | Field and Pole Hill Park. Additional equipment might be deployed at the Lauer Playground. | | |
| 14 | Acquire and deploy additional kiosks, trail markers, trash enclosures, benches, signs, and fencing throughout the open space and trail system. | While the trail system is among the best in South Jersey it could use more of all these items to better manage the growing user community. Likely to require more personnel or larger volunteer group. | Trails |

Over the years the Borough has acquired various parcels of land through tax foreclosure, donation and other means. This list of parcels should be systematically reviewed to identify parcels that should be incorporated as protected open space. Properties that are not important to provide government services or open space should be sold to other parties to provide more resources for completing the Greenway Network.

PARCELS FOR ACQUISITION

The Borough has developed a list of key parcels, listed and ranked in priority order in Table 3 and identified on the Current Open Space and Parcels for Acquisition map, that, if added to the Borough’s open space and recreation inventory, would further some or all of the priority actions listed above. In most cases acquisition of these tracts would extend existing open space, preserve critical habitat, and/or create new green space in the Borough. Each parcel is described below.

Table 3. Gibbsboro Open Space and Recreation Priority Acquisition Parcels.

| Map ID | Block | Lot(s) | Acreage* | All or Part? | Priority | Rationale |
|--------|-------|--|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------|---|
| A | 18.01 | 13.02, 14.02, 15.02, 16.02, 18, 20, 21 | 13.78 of 14.78 | Part of lot 18, all of remaining lots | 1 | 1. Connect Old Egg Harbor Road to 561 2. Acquire viewshed of Phila skyline |
| B | 1.01 | 1.01 | 5.0 of 19.80 | Part | 2 | Connects the Samost Tract to Hilliards Road |
| C | 18.02 | 1.01, 1.04 | 7.35 | All | 3 | Along White Sand Branch |
| D | 24 | 1.01, 1.03, 1.04 | 4.34 | All | 3 | Connects Lakeview Drive to Berlin Road to BHCA |

| Map ID | Block | Lot(s) | Acreage* | All or Part? | Priority | Rationale |
|----------------------|----------------------|---|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|---|
| E | 42 | 1.01, 10 | 9.73 of 10.73 | All of lot 1.01, part of lot 10 | 3 | Connects Lakeview Drive to Berlin Road to BHCA |
| F | 42 | 12.01, 13.01, 13.02, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19 | 120.51 | All | 3 | B2 Natural Heritage Priority Site |
| G | 56 | 7.03 | 1.46 | All | 3 | Provides access to West Clementon Road |
| H | 59.01 | 5 | 6.99 of 7.99 | Part | 3 | Extends Hilliards Creek Wildlife Refuge |
| I | 77 78 79 80 | 1 1 1 1 | 2.36 | All | 3 | Wetlands along Slab Cabin Branch toward Linden Lake |
| Total Acreage | | | 180.51 | | | |

* - Acreage determined from New Jersey GIS parcel data.

OLD EGG HARBOR ROAD/561/VOORHEES BORDER – POTENTIAL ACQUISITION MAP KEY A

These parcels are located in the eastern quadrant of the municipality, on the north side of Route 561 across from the Blueberry Hill Conservation Area (ROSI Map Key 11), in Block 18.01. They consist of Lots 13.02, 14.02, 15.02, 16.02, 18, 20, and 21, comprising 14.78 acres. The parcels would need to be consolidated and subdivided to retain the existing residence on Lot 18, so the actual land for acquisition would be less than the total identified. Acquiring these lots would extend open space from Route 561 north to Old Egg Harbor Road, and create a second overlook of the Philadelphia skyline following Blueberry Hill. This tract is the Borough's top priority for acquisition.

KIRKWOOD ROAD – POTENTIAL ACQUISITION MAP KEY B

This property, comprising 5± acres of Block 1.01, Lot 10.1, is located in the westernmost part of the Borough, adjacent to and south of the Samost Tract (ROSI Map Key 1) and extending to Kirkwood Road. There is a residence on the property that would be retained, so the lot would need to be subdivided and the actual land for acquisition would be less than the total identified. Acquiring this property would extend open space south from the Samost Tract to Hilliards Road. This property is the second-highest acquisition priority for the Borough.

Following are lower priority parcels for acquisition by the Borough, classified as Priority Level 3.

DIRT DUMP TRACT – POTENTIAL ACQUISITION MAP KEY C

The White Sand Branch runs through this 7.18-acre property, Block 18.02, Lots 1.01 and 1.04, between South Lakeview Drive and Berlin Road in the east-central part of the Borough. Acquiring these lots would begin to establish a new green space in the center of the Borough, and would preserve open space around the White Sand Branch, a key stream that runs from Clement Lake to Bridgewood Lake.

WHITE SAND BRANCH – POTENTIAL ACQUISITION MAP KEY D

This tract, comprising 4.2 acres on Block 24, Lots 1.01, 1.03 and 1.04, lies across Berlin Road from the Dirt Dump Tract. Acquiring these lots would expand this new green space, and extend the open space around the White Sand Branch further to the west-southwest toward Bridgewood Lake.

HONEY RUN – POTENTIAL ACQUISITION MAP KEY E

These are two discrete tracts, both of which would expand on open space that is already part of the Borough’s ROSI, on the south side of Berlin Road along Honey Run Branch in the eastern part of the Borough. Block 42, Lot 1.01 (6.08 acres), would extend the Steiner Tract (ROSI Map Key 10) to the east, and Block 42, Lot 10 (4.46 acres) would extend the Blueberry Hill Conservation Area (ROSI Map Key 11), to the northwest to encompass the land around Woodland Lake. There is an existing residence on Lot 10 that would remain, so that lot would need to be subdivided, and the actual land available for acquisition will be less than its total acreage.

UNITED STATES AVENUE TRACT – POTENTIAL ACQUISITION MAP KEY F

This property, comprising a total of 115.78 acres on Block 42, Lots 12.01, 13.01, 13.02, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 19, are located in the southeastern part of the Borough, south of the Blueberry Hill Conservation Area (ROSI Map Key 11). These are essentially lands that are being mined for sand and gravel. When the mining operation ceases and the land restored, the Borough would seek to acquire the parcels in whole or in part. Acquiring these tracts would extend open space from Pole Hill Park west to United States Avenue and south to the municipal border. All the lots in this tract except 12.01 are designated as B2 Natural Heritage Priority Sites, a designation from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection that means there are occurrences of rare species and natural communities of “[v]ery high significance on a global level, such as the most outstanding occurrence of any ecological community.” These priority areas are associated with the headwaters of Slab Cabin Branch and are not proposed to be mined.

WEST CLEMENTON ROAD – POTENTIAL ACQUISITION MAP KEY G

This parcel, Block 56, Lot 7.03, is a roughly L-shaped lot of 1.45 acres with frontage on West Clementon Road. The property would add to the stream corridor along Slab Cabin Branch that is presently protected by state regulation from development.

HILLIARDS CREEK – POTENTIAL ACQUISITION MAP KEY H

This parcel, Block 59.01, Lot 5, comprises 8± acres with frontage on the south side of Kirkwood Avenue in the western part of the Borough. Hilliards Creek runs along the southern edge of the property. Acquiring this property would extend the open space around the Heritage Village development (ROSI Map Key 7) to the east toward the Hilliards Creek Wildlife Refuge. There is a residence on the property that would remain, so the lot would need to be subdivided, and the actual acreage that can be acquired will be less than the total stated acreage.

SLAB CABIN BRANCH – POTENTIAL ACQUISITION MAP KEY I

These parcels, Block 77, Lot 1; Block 78, Lot 1; Block 79, Lot 1 and Block 80, Lot 1, comprise 2.09 acres between Holly Road to the south and East Hilliards Road to the north, in the southwest corner of the Borough. Preserving them as open space will permanently protect the wetlands along Hilliards Creek toward Linden Lake.

METHODS OF PRESERVATION

Most of the Borough's open space land has been acquired through fee simple purchase or donation of title which provides it with the strongest control over the use of the land. It is not the only type of preservation, however, and other suitable methods may be employed in meeting the Borough's goals. These methods include:

Conservation Easement - A conservation easement establishes certain restrictions or grants certain rights with respect to the use and development of a parcel. Easements may be purchased or donated by the owner to the Borough or an agency willing to hold them. Public access to the property may or may not be granted.

Purchase of Development Rights - The purchase of development rights is a form of conservation easement where the difference in value of the highest and best use of the undeveloped land before and after the creation of an easement restriction is paid to the owner. Specific restrictions and rights on the use and development of the property are agreed to by the owner. Public access to the property may or may not be granted.

Reserved Life Estates or Remainder Trusts - Under this method of acquisition, ownership of the parcel is transferred to the municipality or controlling agency and the owner retains rights to the use of the property for the remainder of their lifetime.

Bequests - Ownership of the parcel is transferred to the municipality or controlling agency upon the death of the owner.

Purchase - Fee simple acquisition is the easiest method of acquisition. A price, generally reflecting fair market value, is negotiated and agreed upon by the parties and a transfer of full title of the property is made in exchange for the negotiated compensation.

Installment Purchase - This is a variation of a fee simple acquisition in which a set number of acres is periodically purchased or partial payments are made until full title is obtained. This often reduces capital gains taxes for the seller.

Third Party Acquisition via Conservancy Groups - There are numerous groups with conservation objects that are willing and able to acquire and hold open space for preservation purposes. Gibbsboro, where appropriate, will form partnerships and work closely with such organizations to assist them in the procurement of open space that is consistent with this Plan.

Eminent Domain - Although not a preferred practice, the acquisition of land via eminent domain or condemnation should be considered in instances where the acquisition of a specific parcel is deemed critical to the success of the recreation/open space program, all reasonable offers for purchase have been rejected and negotiation has been exhausted. It should be noted that the owner of a parcel that is acquired by government via condemnation is compensated at "fair market value" for the parcel. The Borough's current policy is to avoid condemnation.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Open Space and Recreation Plan brings together and builds upon ongoing public open space and greenway planning efforts that were first outlined in the Borough's 1986 Conservation Plan and the 1995 Recreation Plan Element. These efforts have been further advanced through collaboration of Borough leadership with members of the Borough's Planning Board and Environmental Committee. In addition, the Borough has been well served by numerous local volunteers.

As required by the Green Acres program, two noticed public hearings were held on the Open Space and Recreation Plan, including an open public meeting held virtually on July 27, 2020 and the Planning Board's public hearing on the draft plan on October 14, 2020, prior to adoption of the plan. The public hearings also address the State's Municipal Land Use Law requirements pertaining to adoption of the Open Space and Recreation Plan as an Element of the Borough's Master Plan pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28b(7) and -(8).




DRAFT

Current Open Space and Parcels for Acquisition

LOCATION:
Gibbsboro Borough, Camden Co, NJ

DATE:
October, 2020

Legend

-  Open Space
-  Parcels for Acquisition
-  Composite Constraints*

* FEMA 100-year flood,
NJDEP wetlands w/ 50-foot buffer &
steep slopes in excess of 15%.



Clarke Caton Hintz
Architecture
Planning
Landscape Architecture

