Burlington County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan (2022 Update)







BURLINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PRESERVED FARM





Burlington County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan (2022 Update)

Compiled by the:

Burlington County Agriculture Development Board

For the:

Board of County Commissioners of the County of Burlington

2022 Burlington County Agriculture Development Board

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List of Acronyms and Commonly Used Words

ADA - Agriculture Development Area
AFO - Animal Feeding Operations, as defined by the Clean Water Act of 1972
AFT - American Farmland Trust
AMA - Agricultural Management Assistance
AMP - Agriculture Management Practices
ATL - Acquisition Targeting List
BCCAC - Burlington County Community Agriculture Center
CADB - Burlington County Agriculture Development Board
CAFOs - Concentrated animal feeding operations
CAFRA - Coastal Area Facility Review Act
CMP - Comprehensive Management Plan
COAH - Council on Affordable Housing
CREP - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
CSA - Community-Supported Agriculture
CWA - Federal Clean Water Act of 1972
DOD - Department of Defense
DOE - Deed of Easement
DRC - Department of Resource Conservation (Burlington County)
DSHWT - Depth to Seasonal High Water Table
EDRP – Burlington County Bridge Commission office of Economic Development and Regional Planning
EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentive Program
FPP - Farmland Preservation Program
FRPP - Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program of the USDA
FSA - Farm Services Agency
GIS - Geographic Information Systems
GSPT - Garden State Preservation Trust
IPA - Installment Purchase Agreement
JLUS - Joint Land Use Program
LCCS - Land capability classification system
LIP - Landowner Incentive Program
MLUL -Municipal Land Use Law
MOA - Memorandum of Understanding
NJAES - New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station
NJDA - New Jersey Department of Agriculture
NJDEP - New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
NJPC – New Jersey Pinelands Commission
NJSPC - New Jersey State Planning Commission
NOFA - Northeast Organic Farming Association
NRCS - Natural Resources Conservation Service
PDC - Pinelands Development Credit
PIG - Planning Incentive Grant Program of the SADC
RTF - Right to Farm, referencing the Right to Farm Act as amended by P.L. 1998, c. 48
RDSO - Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities
SADC - State Agriculture Development Committee
SCD - Soil Conservation District
SDRP - State Development and Redevelopment Plan
SSAMP - Site-Specific Agriculture Management Practices
TDR - Transfer of Development Rights
The Act - New Jersey Agriculture Retention and Development Act, P.L. 1983, c. 32
The County Commissioners - Board of County Commissioners of Burlington County
The Plan - Burlington County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan (2009-2018)
The Strategic Plan - the 1998 Burlington County Farmland Preservation Strategic Plan

The Technical Report - Northern Burlington County Regional Strategic Plan Technical Report – Economic Development and Agriculture (2004)
Trust Fund - Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund
USDA - United States Department of Agriculture
USEPA - United States Environmental Protection Agency
WHIP - Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program
WRP - Wetlands Reserve Program

Executive Summary

The Board of County Commissioners of Burlington County is committed to sustaining its farmers as well as preserving its farmland. The **Burlington County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan** (the "Plan") was initially prepared for the purpose of creating one document that would guide Burlington County's Farmland Preservation Program through its next ten (10) years (2009-2018). This Plan since became a requirement of State Agriculture Development Committee Regulations (N.J.A.C. 4:76-17.3) for funding through the Garden State Preservation Trust in 2009 and beyond. In addition, this Plan evaluated the implementation of Burlington County's 1998 Strategic Farmland Preservation Plan and put into action county-wide agriculture viability strategies that were recommended by the *Strategies for Farm Viability* (December 2004) report prepared in conjunction with the Northern Burlington County Strategic Plan. Throughout 2021 and 2022 efforts were made to update the original plan. This updated plan shall also serve as the one document to guide the County's Farmland Preservation Program for the next 10 years. All references to the 'Plan' will now refer to the 2022 update. In general, this Plan serves to build on the 2008 Plan. Aside from updating as much information as possible, this Plan intentionally shifts focus from acquisition of farms for preservation towards efforts to ensure enhanced stewardship of farms that have already been preserved and to focus on the economic viability of these farms and the agricultural industry within Burlington County moving forward.

96,000+ acres of farmland remain in Burlington County as of the date of adoption of this Plan. Over 30,000 acres have been permanently protected from conversion to non-agricultural uses through permanent deed-restrictions. In addition, roughly 26,000 acres of land in agricultural planning areas of the state-regulated New Jersey Pinelands have been deed-restricted through the Pinelands Development Credit Program. In total, nearly 63,000 acres (roughly 66 percent of the existing agricultural land base) have been protected from conversion to non-agricultural uses.

Chapter II of this Plan chronicles the history of Burlington County's Farmland Preservation efforts. Chapter IV documents the County's existing agricultural land base while Chapter V provides information on the County's agricultural industry (past, current and the trends anticipated for the future). Previously prepared studies were used extensively and serve as the informational back bone of this document and are discussed in Chapter III. Equally important are Chapters on Agricultural Economic Development, Industry Sustainability, Retention and Promotion (VI), Land Use Planning (VII), and Stewardship (VIII). The Plan culminates with Chapter IX, which provides clear goals and strategies for the County to work towards during the next 10 years.

This Plan reaffirms the **Mission Statement** that shall guide the Board of County Commissioners and County Agriculture Development Board in all future decisions related to public investment in farmland and agricultural economic development.

Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program Mission Statement

The Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program exists to advance the quality of life in Burlington County by preserving a permanent agricultural land base and by maintaining a regulatory environment that supports a viable agricultural industry.

In addition to a defined mission, this Plan includes a **Vision Statement** regarding the future conditions it aspires to attain.

Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program Vision Statement

The Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program envisions a future in which a strong and dynamic agricultural industry persists and contributes to a vigorous local economy and an enhanced quality of life for all Burlington County residents.

This mission and vision will be fully realized by embracing eight (8) specific goals. These goals are:

Goal #1: Preservation of an Additional 10,000 Acres
Goal #2: Stewardship of Protected Land and Natural Resources
Goal #3: Promotion & Protection of the Right to Farm
Goal #4: Coordination of Land Use Planning Activities
Goal #5: Implementation of Agricultural Economic Development Strategies
Goal #6: Coordination of Public Sector Agricultural Services
Goal #7: Expand the Implementation of the SADC Farm Stewardship Program
Goal #8: Promote Stewardship Efforts Focused on Mitigating the Impacts of Climate Change on Preserved Farms

This Plan acknowledges that county and municipal investment in farmland preservation must be complimented with investment by other preservation partners and innovative planning / zoning techniques in order to meet the County's goal of preserving an additional 10,000 acres. With this in mind, this Plan calls for 5,000 acres to be preserved through the County's Farmland Preservation Program with the additional 5,000 acres to be preserved via measures that include State Agriculture Development Committee acquisitions, local Transfer of Development Rights Programs and the Pinelands Development Credit Program. The County's Farmland Preservation efforts will be focused on four (4) project areas in which future acquisition efforts will be concentrated. These project areas build on existing contiguous blocks of preserved farmland and are consistent with all known local and regional economic development and planning objectives.

This Plan also makes various references to the Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders. It is important to note that in 2008 this was the name utilized by the now Board of County Commissioners of the County of Burlington. From this point forward any reference to 'Freeholders,' or the 'Board of Chosen Freeholders,' is to reference the Board at that time in the past and not the current accepted reference.

Chapter I
Introduction

In much of Burlington County, agricultural land and agribusiness remain the defining characteristics of the landscape. It is not by accident or chance that, in the most densely populated state in the nation, Burlington County has retained over 96,200+ acres[1] (approximately 18 percent of the total county land mass) of farmland. The continued existence of farmland and farmers in Burlington County is a result of sustained public and private efforts. Agriculture is recognized as an essential variable in any equation related to the quality of life of all County residents. Studies report that this privately owned and managed land produces fresh produce and other farm products, generates positive tax revenues, and maintains an array of amenities ranging from open space and scenic views to ecological and environmental functions, to recreational opportunities for an ever-growing urban and suburban population.[2]

The effort to preserve farmland and thus, the agricultural industry, is a partnership between the public sector, tax payers, and the farming community. The public sector (Federal, County, State and Municipal entities) has invested over **$182 million** in farmland preservation programs in Burlington County and has adopted regulations that both promote the continuation of farming activities and discourage non-agricultural development in the rural and environmentally sensitive regions of the County. Over the past four decades, the taxpayers of the County have approved various funding referenda which have voluntarily increased the local property tax levy to support the public sector's farmland acquisition programs. In addition, voters have chosen to continue to support elected officials that understand that farmland preservation programs must be complemented with local protections primarily in the form of nuisance protection ordinances for the agricultural industry. Residents continue to support local farmers with their food dollars by purchasing agricultural products directly at road-side stands and community farmers markets. The most important and frequently overlooked partners are the local farmers who have chosen to preserve their farms, continue to innovate, and invest in and believe that there is a future in farming in Burlington County and New Jersey.

Burlington County is recognized by many as the pioneer of New Jersey's on-going efforts to preserve agricultural land. In 1985, the Burlington County Board of Freeholders chose to purchase five (5) farms, totaling +/- 600 acres in Chesterfield Township for the purpose of preserving them for continued agricultural use. The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), under the authority of the NJ Agriculture Retention and Development Act (the Act), provided the County with a cost-share towards the cost of the development easements. These farms represent the start of not only Burlington County's Farmland Preservation Program (FPP), but the State's FPP. **The County and the State programs have a common goal, preserving Burlington County and New Jersey's agricultural land base in order to establish agriculture as a permanent component of the landscape, economy and culture.**

The County's FPP was not only the first but continues to be a state-leader in both the number of acres and number of farms preserved. The County adopted a strategy at the onset of its efforts to ensure that public dollars were invested wisely by focusing its acquisition efforts on "1,000-acre blocks" of unpreserved farmland. This early focus on

[1] 2017 US Census of Agriculture

[2] Heinrich-Shilling Joint Venture (2004), Agriculture in Burlington County's Farmbelt: Current Industry Status and Trends

"contiguity" of preserved farms has led to significant blocks of agricultural land being deed-restricted largely without being operationally restricted by non-agricultural uses at their property boundary.

The County's FPP has historically been ranked in the top ten best county-based farmland preservation program in the nation by The Farmland Preservation Report[3] and was awarded the 2007 Governor's Award for Excellence by Governor Jon S. Corzine. Instead of allowing this recognition to breed complacency, the Board of Chosen Freeholders, as implored by the Burlington County Agriculture Development Board (CADB), chose to consider the success of its land preservation strategies as only the beginning of its efforts to ensure the agricultural industry remains viable.

In order for the upfront public investment in farmland preservation to be fully realized, it is imperative that the goals, strategies and indicators of the County's FPP be reanalyzed. This Plan strives to avoid duplicating the extensive research and planning work already completed. The supporting studies considered in Chapter III are incorporated by reference and have played a large role in guiding the development of this Plan.

This Plan strives to facilitate coordination between Federal, State and County-based public sector agricultural service providers.[4] These agencies play important and distinct roles in assuring that farm operations remain viable in the face of the many challenges of the contemporary agricultural economy. Each agency has specific goals, budgets, authorities, and expected deliverables. The Board of County Commissioners and the CADB recognize the autonomy of these institutions and do not seek to replicate their efforts. The Board of County Commissioners and the CADB seek to assist these agencies by working together to properly serve the agricultural community and the public at large.

Farmers, like many other small family businesses owners, face risky and expensive operational decisions in order to adapt to the changing regional and global economy. These private decisions will largely determine if a viable agricultural economy will persist into the future. The sole act of preserving the land will not secure a bright economic future for farmers. It will, however, ensure that a land base will be available for production, a fundamental economic input for the agricultural industry.

The Board of County Commissioners and the CADB strive to maintain Burlington County and New Jersey as a permanent home for all types of farmers, whether they are traditional crop farmers, diversified direct-marketers, or somewhere in between.

[3] The Farmland Preservation Report. 2007 Ranking of County-based Farmland Preservation Programs. Bowers Publishing Inc.

[4] These agencies are described and referenced in Chapter VI, VIII, and IX

Chapter II
Agriculture Retention in Burlington County to Date

This section of the Plan provides historical context related to the establishment of the County's FPP and its efforts to implement both the 1998 Strategic Plan and the 2008 Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan. In addition to this analysis, this section includes a description of the development of the County's Agriculture Development Area (ADA) and its strategic targeting methodology (the Acquisition Targeting List [ATL]).

Further in this section descriptions of the programs that are active in Burlington County for permanent farmland preservation are described along with detailed statistics related to acreage preserved by program. The relationship between the County's FPP and the Municipal Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Programs, the Term Easement Programs, the Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) Program, and County Open Space and Park System Initiatives are fully explored. FPP funding sources and past expenditures are also documented in this section.

The Origins of Agriculture in Burlington County [5]

Covering 827 square miles of land and water, Burlington County is the largest county in New Jersey and stretches from the Delaware River to the Atlantic Ocean. Like most of New Jersey, Burlington County rose from agrarian roots. The patterns of agricultural land in Burlington County today have been shaped and formed over the past several hundred years. Today, agricultural land use patterns continue to evolve in Burlington County. Changes in global markets, transitions in commodity production, growing development pressure, and state and local policies all converge to shape and influence the use of agricultural land in Burlington County and the Farm Belt.

Agriculture in the area predates the arrival of European settlers. Native Americans farmed in the region (originally named Matinicunk) at the time British Quakers arrived in the New World in the early 1600s. Native Americans cultivated a number of crops and, understanding the limitations of soils, rotated fields in order to prevent the depletion of soils. As early European settlers arrived, they were able to begin cultivation on small fields utilized by Native Americans immediately rather than having to clear forested lands. An abundance of good agricultural soils with proximity to major urban centers contributed significantly to the development of the county's early agricultural industry.
As the 1800s ended, more than 2,500 farms operated over 343,000 acres of land in the county, about two-thirds of the total county land base and more than 12 percent of all New Jersey farmland. However, during the twentieth century as the urban population increased, the demand for food drove the rise of large commercial farms. Burlington County followed this trend. After World-War II, upper and middle-class populations sought refuge from the poor conditions of inner cities and moved to the suburbs. Subsidized by public policy and private investment, residents of cities fled in masses to new developments outside of the urban core constructed mostly on land previously in agricultural use. One unintended consequence of this new residential pattern was to drive the source of food production and traditional food outlets even further from the urban centers.

[5] Parts excerpted from Heinrich-Shilling Joint Venture (2004), Agriculture in Burlington County's Farmbelt: Current Industry Status and Trends

By 1950, the county had about 1,900 farms remaining and farmland area had declined to 211,588 acres, 40 percent of the county's area. According to recent Census of Agriculture data (2017), Burlington County has 915 farms remaining today, operating on 96,256 acres of farmland [Table 1]. Farmland now accounts for less than one-fifth of the county's land base. In the past 100 years, the county has lost two-thirds of its farms and 70 percent of its farmland. **Since 1950, Burlington County has lost over half of its farms and farmland.**

Table 1

Year	Farms (Number)	Avg. Farm Size (Acres)	Land in Farms (Acres)
2017	915	105	96,256
2015	838	114	95,899
2007	922	93	85,790
2002	906	123	111,237
1997	857	121	103,667
1992	816	119	97,186
1987	834	124	103,224
1982	743	152	112,689
1978	717	181	129,747
1974	708	202	142,751
1969	857	166	142,132
1964	1,070	154	164,835
1959	1,351	137	184,727
1954	1,835	113	207,618
1950	1,905	111	211,588
1945	1,629	108	176,242
1940	1,847	171	314,825
1935	2,122	103	219,273
1930	1,948	94	182,740
1925	2,132	86	183,940
1920	2,172	125	271,235
1910	2,389	121	287,816
1900	2,549	135	343,096

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, various years

The continued loss of agricultural land in Burlington County started to weigh heavily on the minds of public officials, farmers and residents. Unfortunately, it took this significant conversion of agricultural land for the public to recognize the array of public amenities that agriculture brings to the table. These non-production public benefits include, but are not limited to:

- Tax paying, privately-managed green space
- Air and water recharge and purification
- Aesthetic viewsheds
- Conservation of Wildlife habitat
- Recreational opportunities
- Preservation of rural character
- Links to an agricultural heritage

The first farmland preservation tool created by the State of New Jersey came by way of public referendum, approved by the voters in November of 1963 by a 2 to 1 margin. The result of this public question was the adoption of the Farmland Assessment Act in 1964. This legislation required tax assessors to assess farmland according to this agricultural productivity, rather than its highest and best use (for example, residential or commercial

development). This was viewed as a "tourniquet that helped stanch the gush of farmland acres into acres of housing and strip malls that began post World War II.[6]" Without further action and investment, the loss of agricultural land was sure to continue.

After years of deliberation on how to slow the loss of agricultural land, the Freeholder Board and the State of New Jersey began to take action. In January of 1983, the state legislature adopted the Agriculture Retention and Development Act (the Act). This set the stage for purchasing easements from farmers to preserve farmland in perpetuity. This idea was hatched earlier in Burlington County by then Freeholder Robert C. Shinn. In 1977, Shinn initiated what appears to be the first public investment in preserving farmland for the sake of protecting agriculture in New Jersey. He led the Freeholder Board to the decision to preserve a 530-acre cranberry farm in Southampton Township (within the NJ Pinelands) with proceeds from a $1-million bond issue approved by the voters of Burlington County. This acquisition and the events preceding it have been chronicled in Chapter 4 of a recently published book entitled, Tending the Garden State – Preserving Agriculture in New Jersey.

In 1985, after the passage of the Act, the Freeholders preserved five (5) farms in Chesterfield Township totaling just over 600 acres with the assistance of the State of New Jersey through the SADC. This acquisition represents what is recognized as the first formal acquisition of the State Farmland Preservation Program.

Early Stages of the County's FPP (1985-1997)

After the preservation of the "Chesterfield Commons" farms, the CADB and its staff did their best to keep an aggressive acquisition pace but funding and landowner interest was hard to come by. The status of agriculture in Burlington County, despite these efforts, continued to lose ground.

According to the 1998 Burlington County Farmland Preservation Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan), "the impacts of increased development pressure on the viability of farming are pervasive and constitute a serious threat to the future presence of agriculture in the County." The Strategic Plan recognized that friction is created by new development that can result in a compromised business environment for farmers. This situation is commonly known as the "impermanence syndrome," the inability of farmers to conduct their business and the seemingly unavoidable sale of their farm for development. If this condition takes hold, farmers in a region tend to avoid investment in their farming equipment, maintenance of farm buildings and leads to reduced efforts towards soil and water conservation practices.

As referenced in the Strategic Plan, between 1954 and 1992, total farmland in Burlington County dropped from 207,618 acres to 97,186 acres, a reduction of 110,434 acres, or 53 percent. It was projected that this rate of loss, if continued, would result in the total loss of its remaining farmland resources in 44 years (2032). According to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Land Use/Land Cover data, between 1986 and 1997, a total of 85,365 acres of agricultural land were lost statewide to other uses. More than 12 percent (about 10,500 acres) of the agricultural land converted during this period was located in Burlington County. This rate of agricultural land conversion was second only to Hunterdon County.

[6] Harrison, George H. Tending the Garden State – Preserving Agriculture in New Jersey Pg. 75

The Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program Strategic Plan (1998-2008)

According to the 1998 Strategic Plan, the Freeholder Board and the CADB acknowledged that even though the program was recognized as a state leader and had been achieving a modest level of success, the County was "essentially, and literally, losing ground in the fight against farmland loss." The CADB estimated that it was losing "twice the amount of land it is able to preserve." Development pressure was forcing farmers to sell out, causing increased RTF conflicts, a "compromised business environment" and attacks on farmland equity through zoning.

In addition to the continued rapid loss of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, the CADB was finding it difficult to solicit applications from the farms that could add to those existing blocks of preserved farmland or to create new "1,000 acres blocks" as was the CADB's initial goal. Areas where preservation was desirable, such as in the flight path of McGuire Air Force Base, were low on the state ranking list for funding because they were new areas or were not contiguous with other preserved lands. Low appraisal values also discouraged landowners from applying.

To reinvigorate the County's preservation efforts, the Strategic Plan had one primary goal; to ***"preserve the greatest amount of productive agricultural land in the shortest period of time possible."*** To achieve that end, the following program initiatives were recommended:

A. Strategic Acquisition Targeting
B. Creation of Acquisition Categories
C. Increase Program Funding
D. Increase SADC Program Effectiveness
E. Support Municipal Agricultural Preservation Measures (primarily Transfer of Development Rights [TDR])
F. Increase Program Education

The Strategic Plan concluded with three primary actions to be taken by the Freeholder Board and the CADB related to the above six (6) initiatives. No actual preservation goal was articulated, though consultation with a financial advisor was recommended to set annual, five and ten year preservation targets.

Implementation of the 1998 Strategic Plan and the 2008 Comprehensive Plan

To implement the *primary* goal of the 1998 Strategic Plan, the County pursued policy and administrative changes to ensure that rate of farmland loss was slowed and owners of unpreserved farmland took the option to preserve seriously.

Since the adoption of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, Burlington County has continued its aggressive approach towards the preservation of high quality farms. Policies and procedures established prior to the 2008 Plan and affirmed in the 2008 Plan, proved to be successful in guiding the County's preservation efforts during this time. The clear and consistent approach in establishing the ADA and our Acquisition Targeting List provided farm owners and municipalities with the necessary information to make long range plans. More specifically, with the relative assurance that the Farmland Preservation Program was well-supported and well-funded, planning could then continue for the long-term persistence of the agricultural industry within Burlington County.

Initiative A: Strategic Acquisition Targeting

Burlington County's Agriculture Development Area (ADA)

The foundation of the County's efforts to strategically target potential applicants is the County's ADA, which was established in consultation with the County's municipal partners and relies heavily on municipal decisions related to planning, zoning, and public infrastructure. The County's ADA is designated according to N.J.A.C. 2:76-1.

As required by statute, the CADB established new criteria for delineating its ADAs, areas where "agriculture shall be the preferred, but not necessarily the exclusive, use of land" (NJSA 4:1C-18). The SADC has established minimum requirements for this area where land would be **eligible** for various farmland preservation programs:

Encompasses productive agricultural lands which are currently in production or have a strong potential for future production in agriculture and in which agriculture is a permitted use under the current municipal zoning ordinance or in which agriculture is permitted as a nonconforming use.

- Is reasonably free of suburban and conflicting commercial development.
- Comprises not greater than 90 percent of the agricultural land mass of the county.
- Incorporates any other characteristics deemed appropriate by the CADB.

As allowed by statute, the CADB established its own ADA requirements:

- Agriculture is the preferred but not necessarily the exclusive, use.
- The land is currently in agricultural production or has a strong potential for future production in agriculture.
- Agriculture is a permitted use by the current municipal zoning ordinance or is allowed as a non-conforming use.
- The land is reasonably free of suburban and conflicting commercial development.
- The land is designated as a "Sending Area" in a TDR/Credits program.
- The land is at least 20 acres in size.
- It must be in State Planning Areas 4, 5, or 10.
- The land cannot be held or used by a public body for nonagricultural purposes.
- It cannot be in a TDR Receiving Area, State Plan center or Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) overlay zone.
- It cannot be within existing or projected road, drainage, or bridge rights of way or land needed for specific roadway improvements.

These ADA requirements were added to ensure that strategic targeting and future easement acquisitions were consistent with local land use goals and did not interfere with innovative zoning techniques such as TDR. It also established a **20 acre minimum standard for qualifying for application to the County's FPP**. This standard remains in effect to this date. Municipalities with objectives to preserve farmland smaller than 20 acres are encouraged to apply for Municipal Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) funding through the SADC and with the support of the Board of County Commissioners and the CADB.

In addition, the County's ADA policy reflected that the County would not target farms intended for inclusionary housing projects required to meet affordable housing requirements set forth by adopted COAH policies. In October 2010, the CADB adopted

the most recent version of its criteria for the ADA based on the amendments to the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan and to build in more flexibility for inclusion in the program.

CADB resolution dated October 14, 2010 revised the requirements for inclusion in the County's ADA as follows:

I. County which satisfies all of the following conditions is hereby designated as within Burlington County's agriculture development area:

A. Agriculture is the preferred, but not necessarily the exclusive, use.
B. The land is currently in agricultural production or has a strong potential for future production in agriculture;
C. Agriculture is a use permitted by the current municipal zoning ordinance or is allowed as a non-conforming use;
D. The area is reasonably free of suburban and conflicting commercial development.

II. Land which otherwise satisfies the criteria described in section I shall be excluded from the ADA if any of the following apply:

A. The land is less than 20 acres in size.
B. The land is within an approved or planned sewer service area according to a Municipal and/or County Wastewater Management Plan.
C. The land is not located in whole or in part within Planning Areas 4 (Rural), 4B (Rural/Environmentally Sensitive), 5 (Environmentally Sensitive) or 10 (Pinelands) as adopted by the New Jersey State Planning Commission.
D. The land does not meet the eligibility requirements for differential property tax assessment consistent with the NJ Farmland Assessment Act of 1964.
E. The land is designated as a "Receiving Area" in an adopted municipal Transfer of Development Rights program.
F. The land is located in "Centers" as designated or endorsed by the New Jersey State Planning Commission and corresponding Pinelands Management Areas (Towns, Villages and Regional Growth Areas).
G. The land is designated for accommodation of low and/or moderate-income housing by a Fair Share Element of a Municipal Master Plan, State mandated obligation, and/or court order.
H. The land has been preserved by a non-profit, municipality, Burlington County, State of NJ, the federal government, or any other public or private entity primarily for outdoor recreation, environmental protection and any other non-agricultural open space purposes, including, but not limited to parks, wildlife management areas and forests.

III. Addition of land to the Agriculture Development Area.

A. Land that satisfies the criteria set forth in section I but which is excluded from the ADA for one or more of the exceptions described in Section II may, nevertheless, be eligible for inclusion in the ADA if conditions 1 through 4 below are met:
    1. The land is in agricultural use;
    2. The municipality requests the addition and said request is supported by*:
        a) A resolution from the governing body;
        b) Explanation of the change(s) in local conditions, local land use planning or owner decisions that warrant the land's addition to the ADA, i.e., why should it be added now, when it was not previously part of the ADA;

c) Explanation of how the addition of this land would implement the goals and strategies of the Burlington County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan;
d) Information about any known complaint or conflicts with adjacent property owners; and
e) Information about the owner's plans for agricultural use in the future, including Natural Resources Conservation Service-approved farm management plan and plans for long-term land ownership;
f) If the additional lands are part of a proposed preservation application, the municipality must demonstrate fiscal capacity to meet the municipal cost share in the Burlington County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund's Financial Policies;

* The CADB reserves the right to require additional supplementary information to review a municipality's request.

3. The property owner consents to the addition, in writing;
4. The municipality has adopted or commits to adopt within 90 days an ordinance consistent with the State Model Right to Farm Ordinance.

B. If conditions 1 through 4 above are met, the land may be added to the ADA if the CADB agrees that all of the following apply:
1. The addition furthers the goals and strategies of the Burlington County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan;
2. The addition will serve to improve the viability of Burlington County agriculture by actions that include, but are not limited to:
a) Substantially improving and expanding public access to agricultural products grown within Burlington County; or
b) Providing the opportunity for the demonstration of innovative agricultural practices; or
c) Providing agricultural education opportunities for Burlington County farmers; or
d) Providing a significant opportunity to educate the public on issues of agricultural importance.
3. If the additional lands are part of a proposed farmland preservation application, the preservation of said land must be consistent with the municipal Master Plan and targeted within the comprehensive farmland preservation plan(s) of the municipality
4. No use or threat of condemnation or down zoning has been made by the municipality, except where such zoning changes may be required to implement a municipal wastewater management plan or transfer of development rights (TDR) plan;

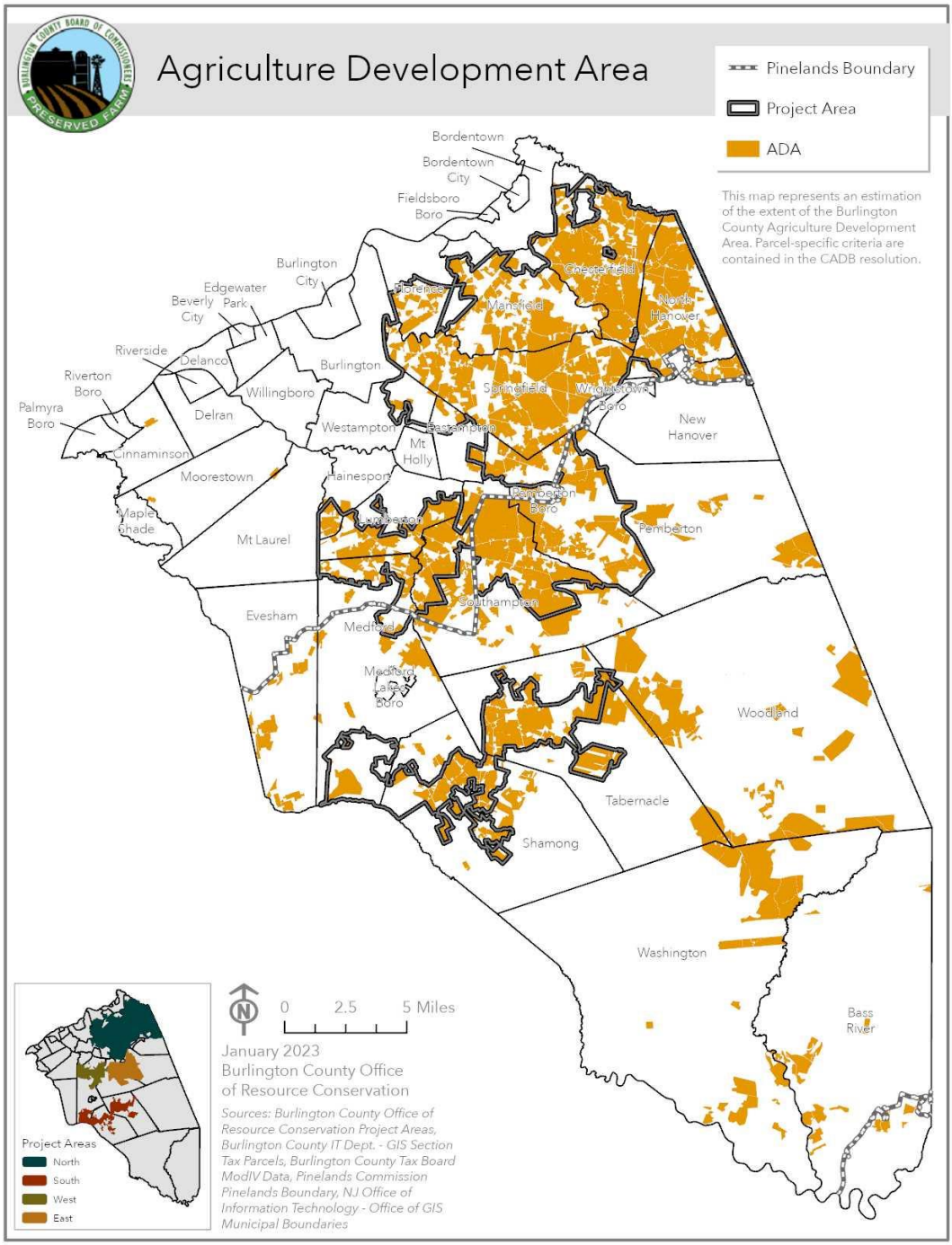
IV. Subchapter 7 of the SADC Regulations shall govern review of Non-Agricultural Development Projects in Agricultural Development Areas. The following public projects are exempt from the "notice of intent" requirements if the public body and/or public utility intends to exercise the power of eminent domain from the acquisition of land or advance a grant, loan, interest subsidy or other funds for the construction of a project as defined in Subchapter 7 of the SADC's regulations:
A. Extension of roadside public utility electric and gas distribution lines; and
B. Minor improvements and/or repairs to existing transportation and water or sewer infrastructure systems that do not increase the capacity or extend service to previously unserviced areas.
C. This includes but is not limited to:

1. Land on which roadway drainage facilities are located and the area needed for expansion or improvement of the facilities.
2. Land on which bridges or causeways are located, along with the area needed for expansion or improvement.
3. Land needed for improvements to existing roadways (e.g., expanded intersections, correcting unsafe conditions).

Condition III of the County's current ADA policy opened the door for the County to explore farms in suburban and urban areas of the County that are locally important and meet very specific requirements. There are several important ***"urban farms"*** in Burlington County that are located in urban or surrounding urban areas that may be viable farmland preservation opportunities. This is a relatively new policy of the CADB and will guide future decision on non-traditional applications to the County's Program. These farms still must be eligible as a targeted farm under the County's ATL Policy, as discussed in this section.

As an example, in 2007 the Freeholder Board, at the recommendation of the CADB, agreed to assist Cinnaminson Township negotiate the preservation of a locally important farm, the Hunter Family Farm. This is a high-quality farm that offers the local residents a direct to market farm stand, has been farmed continuously by the family of the existing owners for the past 300 years and has three (3) generations working on the farm and a solid plan for the future. The CADB found that this farm, along with the former Winner Farm in Moorestown (now the Burlington County Community Agriculture Center [BCCAC]) are urban farms worth preserving, though they do not meet the County's traditional standards. Most recently, in 2009 the County applied the same justification for the preservation of the Browning-Hess Farm in Moorestown Twp. The addition of this farm to the ADA, with the support of Moorestown Township, resulted in the preservation of this farm in 2013.

The following map represents the extent of Burlington County's ADA. The map is intended to be a representation of the County's ADA and when inconsistencies between the map and its ADA policy arise, the ADA policy shall control the formal designation of farmland in Burlington County. The acreage in Burlington County ADA has been revised to an estimated 110,138 acres.

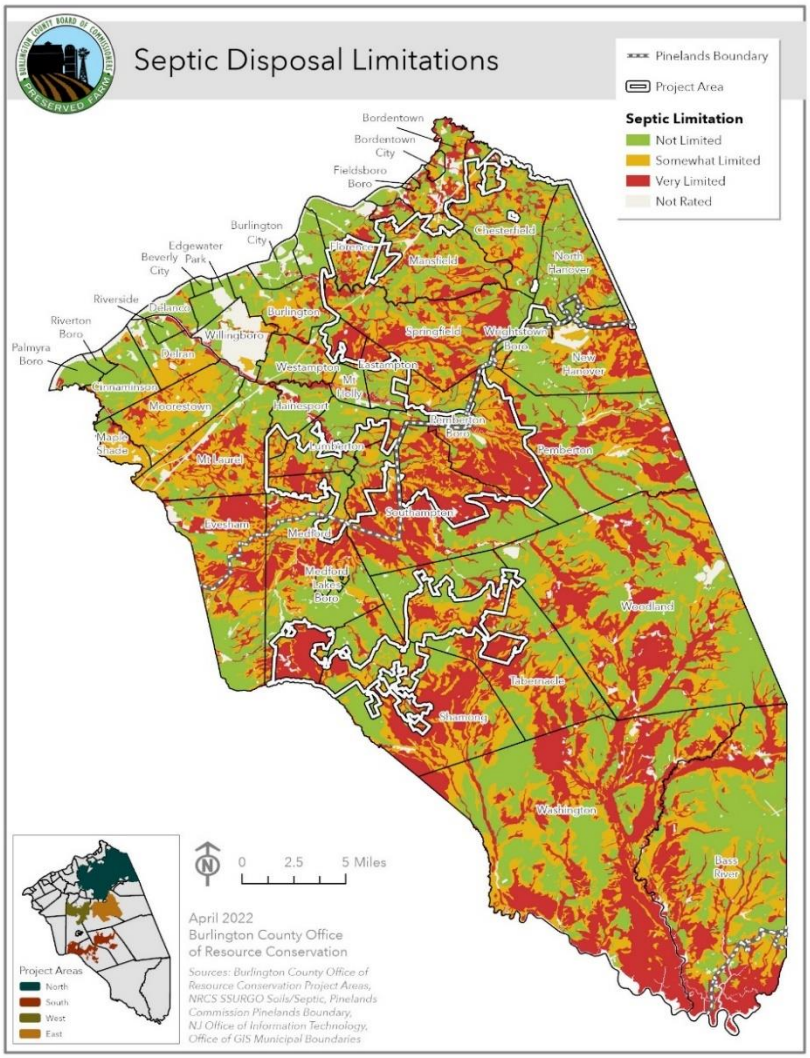


Source: Burlington County DRC, 2022

Acquisition Targeting

Revised criteria were developed in 2016 to identify farms within the ADA that were to be deemed eligible to apply the County's FPP. The ATL criteria were developed for this purpose. The emphasis was (and still is) to target farms based upon soil **quality** and degree of **development threat** as measured by the capacity of the soils of a property to be designable for individual septic systems to support, in most cases, single-family residential development.

The following map depicts the County's Septic Suitability classifications:



For Non-Pinelands Farms, the ATL criteria were amended to include two primary criteria considered when evaluating farms for inclusion on the ATL:

1. Septic Suitability. Properties that have 25 percent or more septic compatible soils are considered to be under threat for conversion to non-agricultural uses, primarily residential development. Therefore, farms must have 25 percent or more septic compatible soils.

2. The quality of the soil for agricultural use. Farms are considered to have good agricultural soils if either (a) they have at least 60 percent prime soils; or (b) they have at least 80 percent prime and state wide important soils combined.

A Pinelands ATL has been established to address the specific types of farms being evaluated. Special criteria was added for the Pinelands because on-site septic suitability is a lesser issue since the properties are valued for preservation primarily on the number of PDCs allocated to the individual property. These criteria include:

A. Traditional Agriculture Farms

The criterion considered when evaluating farms for inclusion on the ATL is the quality of the soil for agricultural use. Farms are considered to have good agricultural soils if either (a) they have at least 60 percent prime soils; or (b) they have at least 80 percent prime and state wide important soils combined.

B. Berry Agriculture Farms

The criterion considered when evaluating berry farms for inclusion on the ATL is that farms must have 20 acres or more in active berry production.

Exceptions to this policy for both Pinelands and non-Pinelands farms may be made based on one or more of the following additional considerations:

- Planning Considerations – Does preservation of a particular property promote or conflict with County and/or municipal planning goals?
- Proximity to Existing Project Areas – Is the property next to or isolated from an existing preservation project area?
- Nearby Conflicting Land Uses – Do adjacent properties represent conflicting land use patterns? Is there a significant potential for right-to-farm conflicts?
- Barriers to Development – Are there other factors, besides septic suitability, that significantly reduce the likelihood of the property being developed?
- Size – Is the property of significant size (generally greater than 200 acres)?
- Unique Soils – If the farm has a large percentage of unique soils, have drainage improvements been made to those areas of the farm? Is productivity on the unique soils relative to that on the portions with prime or state wide important soils?

A copy of the County's current ATL Policy is under Appendix H.

Initiative B: Creation of Acquisition Categories

Priority Farms

A criterion for selecting **Priority Farms** was created to include consideration of Prime soil classification (an indicator of the best agricultural land), septic compatibility of soils (an indicator of development potential), size, and location. Under the Priority Farm selection process, farms on the ATL **must meet one of the following standards** for Priority Farm designation:

A. High Quality Soils:

I. Farms between 75 and 100 acres: at least 80 percent Prime Farmland Soils **and** < 20 percent septic incompatible soils.
II. Farms from 100 to 150 acres: at least 70 percent Prime Farmland Soils **and** < 30 percent septic incompatible soils.
III. Farms from 150 to 200 acres: at least 60 percent Prime Farmland Soils **and** < 40 percent septic incompatible soils.

IV. Farms over 200 acres: at least 50 percent Prime Farmland Soils **and** < 50 percent septic incompatible soils.

B. High Risk of Being Developed:

I. Farms under imminent threat of development (e.g. farms with municipal development approvals or significant developer interest).
II. Farms at least 75 acres in size with 10 percent or less septic incompatible soils.

C. Significant Size or Key Location:

I. Farms larger than 250 acres.
II. Farms whose development would greatly compromise existing project areas.

D. Exceptional Value:

The CADB may choose to include farms not meeting the above criteria on a discretionary basis if they are in some way deemed exceptional.

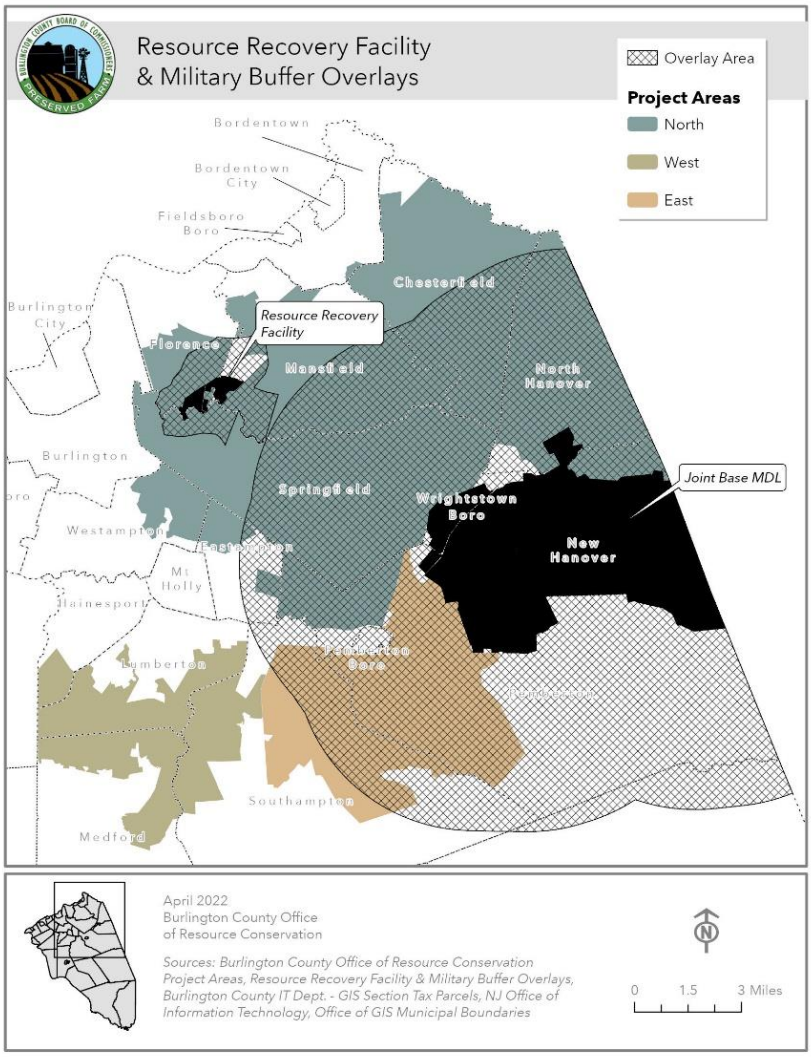
Prime soils and septic compatibility thresholds are more stringent on smaller farms to reflect the fact that, as property size decreases; higher thresholds are needed to ensure that significant amounts of prime and developable soils exist on the property. Farms meeting the ATL criteria but not the priority farm policy are considered **"Alternate Farms."**

A copy of the County's current Priority Farm Policy is under Appendix H.

A list of farms (by Municipality) that currently qualify for the County's FPP are included in Appendix F and mapping is contained in Appendix E, by project area. This list of farms represents the County's 2022 ATL. As of the date of this Plan, the CADB is targeting over **11,500 acres.**

Special Project Areas

The County created two "special" project areas, as recommended by the 1998 Strategic Plan. These delineated areas are the *"Resource Recovery Project Area"* and the *"Military Buffer Zone."* The Freeholder Board decided to waive local cost share in the Resource Recovery Project Area and has sought funding through the U.S. Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program (REPI) to offset local cost share for farms in Military Buffer Zone. The County's current special project areas are shown in the following map in the context of the County's new project areas, described in more detail further on in this Plan.



To avoid confusion, this Plan recommends standardizing and clarifying the terminology used to classify these "special project areas." This Plan and future efforts will classify these areas as **"overlays"** with special rules for preservation within the newly envisioned "NORTH PROJECT AREA." In addition, these overlays or new ones created in the future for specific purposes can be the foundations for unique grant funding partnerships and inter-governmental cooperation.

Emergency Acquisitions (Fee-Simple)

For a period of time the County implemented a strategy of acquiring some farms contained on the ATL through fee-simple purchases. Most of the acquisitions were done in relative emergency situations in which the landowners were not able to accept easement purchases. Once purchased, the County leased the land for agricultural use while at the same time establishing a farmland preservation easement on the property. Ultimately the County would then sell these preserved properties at public auction.

Since the time of the last preserved farm auction in 2012, Burlington County has not acquired any additional farms through fee-simple purchases. The downturn in the economy, coupled with the significant administrative burden in fee simple acquisition

and in holding the land until a subsequent auction made this strategy burdensome. Though the County continues to recognize this strategy as an option for the future as of the date of this plan it is not a strategy currently being implemented.

Initiative C: Increase Program Funding

Funding Sources

Burlington County residents have clearly expressed their commitment to preserving the region's agricultural landscape and their rural character by authorizing funding to stabilize the farmland base and preserve open space. This commitment has been reflected through a long history of supporting bond referenda for land preservation, including the establishment of the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT). In the past forty years, every statewide public referenda for farmland or open space preservation has been approved by the voters. Support in Burlington County for such initiatives has, in fact, typically surpassed statewide approval ratings.

Burlington residents consistently supported, overwhelmingly, the nine (9) Green Acres funding referenda dating back to the early 1960s [Table 2]. Voters in the county similarly supported, by a 3-to-1 margin, the constitutional amendment enabling farmland assessment in 1963. Most recently, more than two-thirds of Burlington County voters authorized the creation and funding of the GSPT.

Table 2

Voter Approval for Statewide Agricultural and Land Preservation Initiatives.

Public Referendum	Burlington County	New Jersey
1961 Green Acres	59%	59%
1963 Farmland Assessment Act	74%	71%
1971 Green Acres	66%	67%
1974 Green Acres	62%	55%
1978 Green Acres	63%	56%
1983 Green Acres	62%	61%
1987 Green Acres	65%	62%
1989 Green Acres	76%	71%
1992 Green Acres	72%	72%
1995 Green Acres	70%	68%
1998 GSPT Act	68%	66%

Source: Schilling (2004).

In 1996 and 1998, Burlington County voters approved two separate $.02 / mil, creating a $.04 / mil County Farmland, Open Space, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund (Trust Fund). Burlington County's dedicated tax has a variety of allowable uses in addition to farmland preservation including open space, historic preservation and park development.

In November 2006, the two previously approved referenda authorizing the County to raise money for these purposes (1996 ($.02/mil) and 1998 ($.02/mil) were extended to sunset in 2036.

Every year the Board of County Commissioners allocates funds to the programs based on program activity. As the total annual revenue generated increases yearly based on the rate of growth, it is impossible to accurately assess the total annual revenue dedicated to farmland preservation by the County. The Board of County Commissioners does not make its yearly funding decisions until yearly adjustments are made in equalized property valuation (typically available from the Board of Taxation in March). In 2021 the tax generated approximately **$10 million** for these purposes.

Table 3 represents the actual allocation to farmland preservation from the Trust Fund by the Board of County Commissioners. The discretionary fund can be and often is used for funding farmland preservation projects:

Table 3

Farmland Preservation - Trust Fund Allocations
2008 - 2021

Year	Farmland Preservation	Discretionary Account	Total Fund
2008	$0	$10,200,000	$20,400,000
2009	$5,262,235	$0	$21,048,940
2010	$5,189,285	$5,189,285	$20,757,139
2011	$4,982,104	$4,982,104	$19,928,415
2012	$0	$0	$19,158,364
2013	$0	$0	$6,739,097
2014	$0	$0	$6,784,346
2015	$0	$0	$18,259,464
2016	$0	$0	$18,538,246
2017	$0	$4,704,843	$18,819,373
2018	$0	$0	$11,807,292
2019	$0	$0	$14,362,183
2020	$2,467,273	$0	$9,869,092
2021	$1,243,358	$1,243,358	$9,946,865
Total	**$19,144,255**	**$26,319,590**	**$216,418,816**

Source: Burlington County DRC (2022)

Since 2008, over $19 million of the roughly $216 million generated by the County's Trust Fund to date has been allocated for farmland preservation purposes. Though the overall percentage of the Trust Fund revenue dedicated to Farmland Preservation has been reduced as compared to earlier years that is a reflection of decreased numbers of applications and reduced Farmland Preservation easement costs. During this period no application has been denied due to lack of available funding.

As the chart above indicates, the full $0.04/mil tax levy consistently generates approximately $20 million in revenue and that is expected to continue, or even increase, over the next 14 years. The chart above also indicates the County Commissioners' ability to allocate resources as necessary in any given year to meet the demands of each of the allowable uses.

As a result of the voters' approval to extend the dedicated tax, the County is able to apply the following strategies to meet the financial needs of the Farmland Preservation Program:

- Generate an additional 14 years of revenue for approved purposes;
- Allow for Installment Purchase Agreement (IPA) agreements through 2036, further reducing the County's up-front costs for acquisition;
- Further ability to issue debt against additional revenue for approved purposes.
-

In addition, recent increases to State-level funding have resulted in unprecedented funding available for the Farmland Preservation Program. Currently, counties are eligible to receive annual base grants of $2 million towards the acquisition of farmland preservation easements. Furthermore, counties may seek additional funding through the SADC's competitive funding. These competitive funds seek to support those partners that expend their base grant funding and bring forth additional high quality farms for preservation.

The increase in State Level funding and the County's extension of the dedicated tax until 2036 is expected to allow the Board of County Commissioners and the CADB to continue its aggressive farmland preservation acquisition strategies.

In addition to County and State funding, based on current figures, Burlington County's partners at the local level raise roughly $2 million in funds related to farmland, open space, and historic preservation annually that can be used for the local cost-share obligations under the County's FPP. Further description on the municipal funding obligations is provided further on in this section.

Maximizing Financial Assets

Burlington County's Financial Policies allow for payment of part or the entire purchase price of farmland preservation easements through an IPA. An IPA is a contract between the County and the property owner in which the County promises to pay the purchase price (or portion thereof) for a farmland easement on a future date. The IPA provides for the payment of interest semi-annually between the times that the easement is given to the County and the date that the purchase price is paid to the owner (up to November 2036).

In order to complete as many transactions as possible, the County will offer sellers any combination of cash and IPAs that they request, as long as a seller's IPAs total $100,000 or more. More information related to the use of IPAs can be found in Appendix I.

Though the issuance of debt will be a last resort, the Board of County Commissioners has and, if necessary, will again leverage future revenues of the trust fund for all approved uses of the County's Trust fund.

As of the date of this Plan, Burlington County has funded **76 of the 259 County's closings** through IPAs or promissory notes.

Retain Municipal Financial Participation

According to the County's current Financial Policies, municipalities are required to share acquisition costs on a sliding scale ranging from five (5) percent to twenty (20) percent,

based on money spent on farmland preservation as a percentage of equalized valuation, in accordance with the following table:

Table 4
Municipal Funding Formula

Required Municipal Cost Share	Previous Spending/Equalized Value
5%	>0.75%
10%	>0.50%, <0.75%
15%	>0.25%, <0.50%
20%	<0.25%

Current Municipal Cost Share Percentages for the County's municipal partners are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Municipal Cost Share Percentages (as of 6/22)

Municipality	Cost-Share Percentage (%)for Individual Farms	Total Contribution to Date
Bordentown	20	$79,440
Chesterfield	5	$2,525,268
Eastampton	20	$253,704
Evesham	20	$67,081
Florence	20	$80,000
Hainesport	20	$375,392
Lumberton	20	$269,255
Mansfield	15	$2,284,283
Medford	20	$794,834
Moorestown	20	$1,239,946
North Hanover	10	$1,967,832
Pemberton	20	$0
Southampton	20	$1,789,701
Springfield	5	$2,187,923

Source: Burlington County Farmland Preservation Database (2022)

Burlington County Trust Fund Financial Policies (revised 5/12/12) are included in Appendix H.

Capitalize on Outside Funding Sources

US Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI)

The REPI program is a tool for combating encroachment near existing military installations that can limit or restrict military training, testing and operations. REPI funding can be made available to partnering organizations that have established

preservation programs. Through REPI funding the US Department of Defense becomes a funding partner but not the primary easement holder.

In 2008 Burlington County entered into the first of multiple REPI agreements with the US Department of Defense through the US Air Force in an effort to buffer conflicting land uses surrounding Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. These agreements detail the various funding contributions available to the County and specify the role of the US Department of Defense as it relates to easement enforcement. In short, the REPI agreements place no additional restrictions on the landowners and cede easement enforcement to the US Department of Defense only if the County or SADC fails to do so.

To date Burlington county has utilized REPI funding on over 33 farmland preservation easements totaling 2,258 acres. These easements have cost a total of $14,515,829. REPI funding has contributed $5,788,942 (approximately 40%) towards this total.

Through these agreements Burlington County still has over $1 million dollars in REPI funding that can be utilized for easement acquisitions within a 5-mile buffer surrounding Joint Base M-D-L. Burlington County will continue to pursue additional REPI funding as long as the goals of REPI and the goals of the County's program remain consistent.

Initiative D: Increase SADC Program Effectiveness

In order to capitalize on existing funding, the County adopted internal administrative procedures to acquire easements as quickly as possible, and concentrate on obtaining reimbursement from the SADC as soon as possible after acquisition.

The County has established a policy of pre-acquiring easements and through the SADC's County Planning Incentive Grant Program; application is made for funding reimbursement. The County assumes the cost difference between what the state cost-share percentage would have been based on the actual purchase price and what the SADC certifies as the easement value.

This approach continues to be an effective method and allows the County to work directly with landowners in an effort to close on easement acquisitions in a timely manner. To date the County consistently receives SADC funding for each easement acquisition.

In the event that SADC and County funding becomes limited, the CADB should consider the following options, or others, to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners so that the acquisition goals of the County FPP are able to be met:

- Increase Current Minimum Acreage
- Process only "Priority" Farms
- When TDR / PDC Programs exist, rely on them as the primary preservation tool
- Prioritize Non-Pinelands Farms over Pinelands Farms
- Revise Financial Policies to Require More Landowners to Accept IPAs instead of Cash

Initiative E: Support of Municipal Agricultural Preservation Measures

Municipal Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Programs

The SADC describes the Municipal TDR Program as a municipal planning and preservation tool "used to protect agricultural, historic or environmental resources while

accommodating the needs of development. TDR is a realty transfer mechanism permitting owners of preservation area land to separate the development rights of their property from the property itself and sell them for use elsewhere. Developers who purchase these "development credits" may then develop areas deemed appropriate for growth at densities higher than otherwise permitted. Once the development rights of a property are enrolled the land becomes permanently restricted from further development. TDR is an equity protection mechanism that, unlike traditional zoning, enables preservation area landowners to be compensated for reductions in development potential. When well-designed, TDR can provide benefits to landowners, developers and municipalities."[7]

In October of 1994, the Lumberton Township Planning Board adopted a comprehensive Master Plan which called for the establishment of a voluntary TDR program. The primary receiving area was established just west of the village of Lumberton, in the vicinity of Creek Road and Crispin Road. This receiving area was swiftly designed, approved and constructed. As a result, approximately 700 acres of farmland were preserved. Another receiving area along C.R. 612 is envisioned but approvals for the necessary sewer line extension have yet to be granted by the NJDEP. The sending area was established outside the village of Lumberton and a system for creating transferable development rights at "certain rates depending on the physical characteristics of the land involved.[8]"

In 2018 Lumberton Township took the necessary steps to abolish the TDR program. The TDR program had been inactive for many years. The Lumberton TDR program preserved approximately 850 acres.

In October of 1997, the Chesterfield Township Planning Board adopted a comprehensive Master Plan which called for land use in the Township to be reformed according to the principles of a voluntary TDR Program. The Master Plan identified a primary receiving area southwest of the village of Crosswicks with the sending area comprising of the majority of the remaining agricultural land of the Township. The 2002 Amendment of the Master Plan of the Township of Chesterfield chronicles the development of TDR including the village plan, design principles, circulation, the village center, school and open space components and profiles of residential and community scale development. The Village Plan illustrates the utilization of approximately 1,161 credits in creating a community of 1,269 dwelling units (including 76 affordable housing units) and 90,000 sq. ft. of retail/office space. When the Village Plan is completely implemented, over 7,000 acres of farmland will have been preserved. TDR activity in the receiving and sending areas is ongoing. Over 75% of the receiving area has been constructed or has some level of approvals from the Planning Board and over 3,000 acres in the sending area are preserved or in the process of enrolling their credits. Farms are preserved with a permanent agriculture easement when the assigned credits have been enrolled prior to them being sold and eventually retired by the builders.

The Freeholder Board provided a substantial amount of planning support to Chesterfield and Lumberton Townships to develop and implement their TDR Programs, as described later in this Chapter and in Chapter VIII.

[7] SADC Website – Accessed 08/29/2022

[8] Lumberton Township Master Plan, Adopted October 26, 1994

Municipal Planning Incentive Grants (PIGs)

According to the SADC, the Municipal PIG "enables the SADC to provide grants to municipalities to purchase development easements for permanent preservation of farmland in designated project areas." [9]

The County has supported Municipal PIG applications to the SADC from two municipalities, North Hanover and Lumberton. These two municipalities received approval and funding from the SADC through the Municipal PIG Program. The goals of both grants were to preserve farms that were smaller and did not meet the County's minimum standards but were adjacent to the larger targeted or previously preserved farms.

To date, only one farm has been preserved utilizing this funding source. North Hanover Township closed on this one farm (Laird) in early 2008 and Lumberton Township has yet to process a single application. Though each municipality has put forth great efforts to outreach to eligible targeted farms, many landowners have chosen not to pursue the option. In addition, there are significant challenges with this program since the local expertise related to processing applications is insufficient. Eligibility requirements for this program can be found at N.J.A.C. 2:76-17A.3.

The requirements for eligibility include:

1. The establishment of a properly constituted agricultural advisory committee;
2. A dedicated source of funding for farmland preservation pursuant to P.L.1997, C.24;
3. Prepare and adopt a farmland preservation plan element pursuant to paragraph 13 of section 19 of P.L. 1975, c. 291 in consultation with that agricultural advisory committee;
4. Prepare and adopt a RTF ordinance that is consistent with, or provides greater protections to commercial farm operators and owners than, the Right to Farm Act, N.J.S.A. 4:1C-1 et seq., as determined by the SADC.

Though the Municipal PIG program is still an available option, there are currently no Burlington County municipalities participating in the PIG program.

Appendix H contains a copy of the County's Municipal PIG Policy. This was adopted by the CADB to provide clear directions to the municipalities in Burlington County interested in pursuing this option.

In **Section IX** of this Plan, there are strategies related to improve the success of existing and/or future Municipal PIG applications.

Initiative F: Program Education

Program education is essential to the long-term success of any publicly funded program. The County's FPP is no different. It takes time and careful attention to ensure that program partners and funders (i.e., the taxpayers) understand and appreciate the investment of public funds being made to preserve farmland and farming in Burlington County.

[9] SADC Website – Accessed 8/1/22

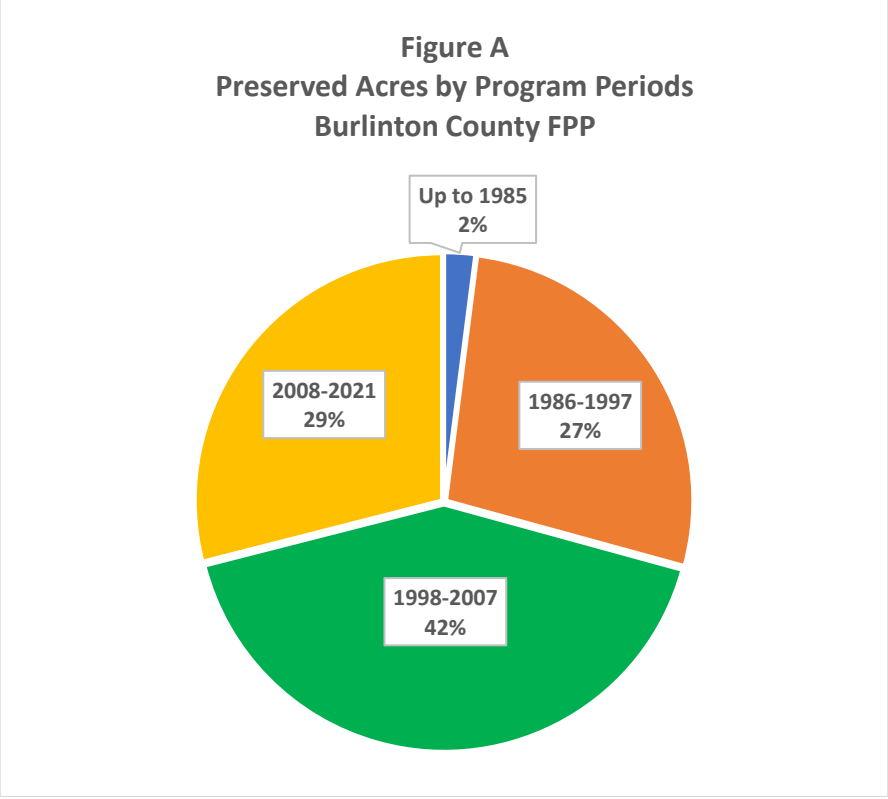
From the early inception of the program, efforts were made to ensure that all residents in all 40 Municipalities in Burlington County understood the process and results related to the County's FPP. In addition, the primary participating municipalities were directly engaged so that they understood their role in the targeting, processing, and funding of applications for farmland preservation. As a result, there is a tremendous amount of sharing of information with local partners and specific point-people at the local level who serve as on-the-ground advocates.

The County continues to make its planning and educational information available through its website and makes every effort to meet with local officials and landowners through in-person meetings. At this stage in the history of the program most officials and landowners are aware of the program and the benefits that result from the preservation of farms. County staff members continue to make themselves available to provide education and promote the program to municipal officials and landowners at every opportunity.

Current FPP Status

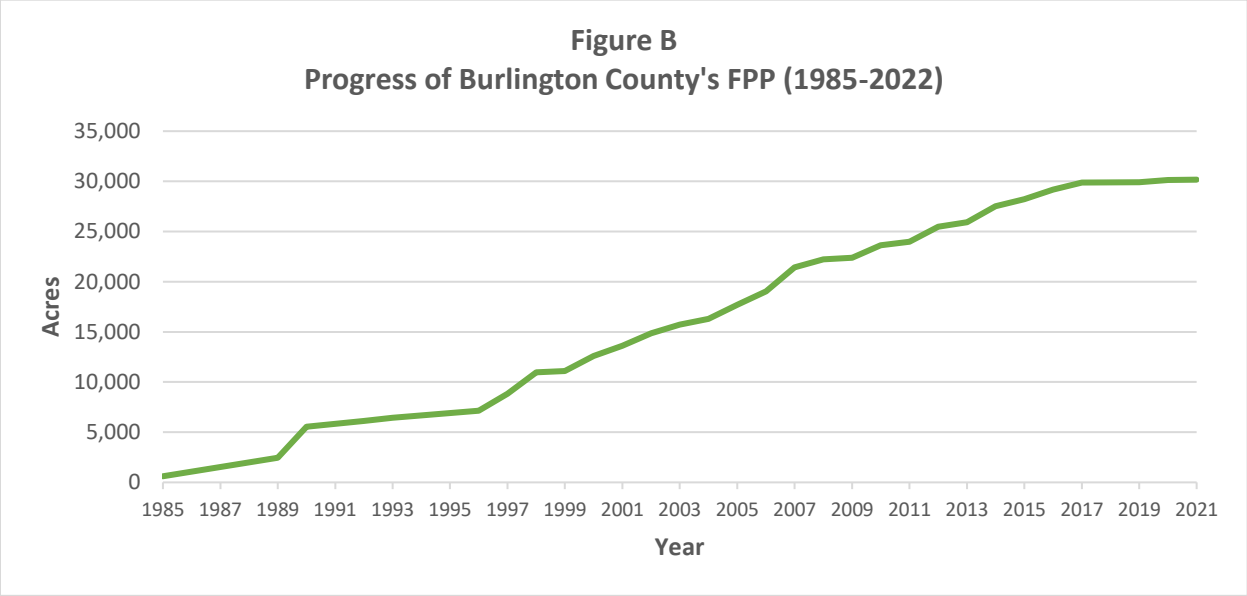
Permanent Farmland Preservation Programs

The following graphs are intended to represent the progress of the County's FPP over the previously referenced periods of program development. These figures only include acreage preserved by Burlington County's FPP.



Figures A & B show the progress of the County's FPP since 1985. This graph only represents acreage preserved by the County's FPP (Easement / Fee Simple Purchases),

and does not include Pinelands Conservation Easements acquired by the county from 1979-1985. As represented, the County's FPP has experienced its best years between 1998 and 2007, the "Strategic Plan Years."



Appendix B includes a list of all farms preserved directly through Burlington County's FPP. As of 8/1/22, Burlington County's FPP has preserved over **33,000 acres through easement and fee simple purchases with the vast majority of the acreage preserved through easement purchases.**

The **County PIG** is a program that encourages a comprehensive planning process for farmland preservation at the county level. It offers several other advantages over the traditional easement purchase program, including enabling counties to accept and process farmland preservation applications year-round, rather than once a year; reducing the timeframe from landowner application to closing; and rewarding counties that complete transactions in a timely manner with the potential for additional funding.[10]

Burlington County has transitioned from the County Easement Purchase Program into the County PIG program as its primary source of SADC funding. **The preparation of this updated Plan is one of the primary requirements to facilitate this transition. Prerequisite requirements for this program can be found at N.J.A.C 2:76-17.3.**

The requirements for eligibility include:

1. A CADB that shall serve as the agricultural advisory committee;
2. A Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan; and
3. A dedicated source of funding for farmland preservation pursuant to P.L.1997, C.24.

[10] SADC Website – Accessed 8/20/22

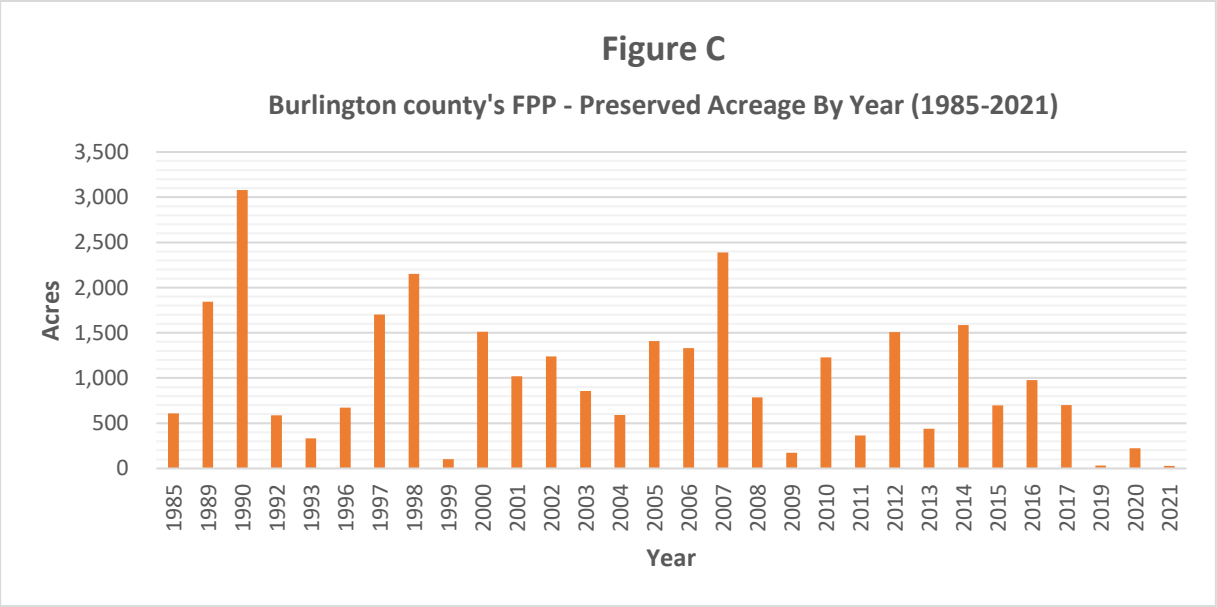
As described in the Table 6, the public has invested more than **$182 million** in the preservation of these farms. Burlington County has successfully leveraged over **$84 million** of State funding to offset the original costs of these farms. Burlington County has received over **$15 million** in matching funds from its partner municipalities (10).

Table 6
Cost-Share Contribution Levels – Burlington County Farmland Preservation Investment (+$182 Million) – As of 4/12/2022

	County	State	Municipal	Non-Profit / Donation	Federal
Total Cost ($)	$73,673,601	$84,756,771	$15,717,891	$2,550,745	$6,070,401
Percentage of Total Investment	**40.48 %**	**46.57 %**	**8.64 %**	**1.40 %**	**3.34 %**

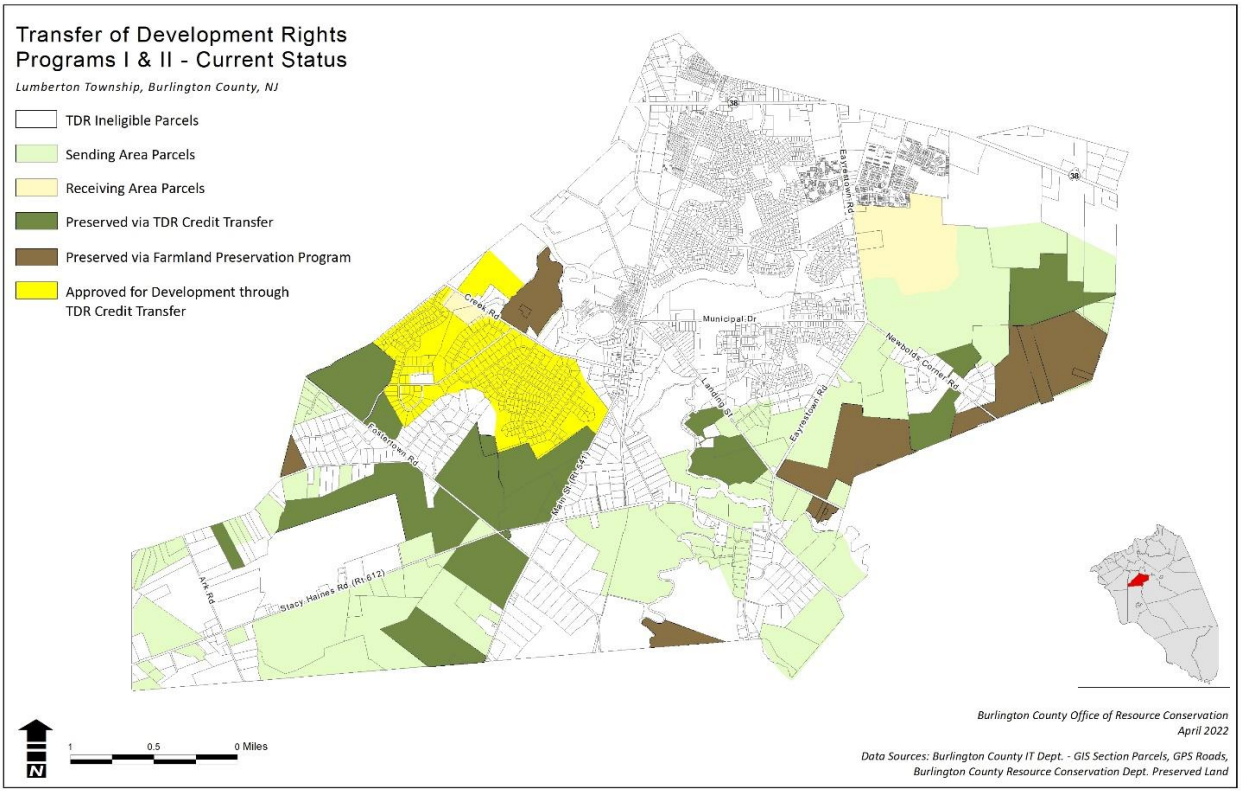
Source: Burlington County Department of Resource Conservation

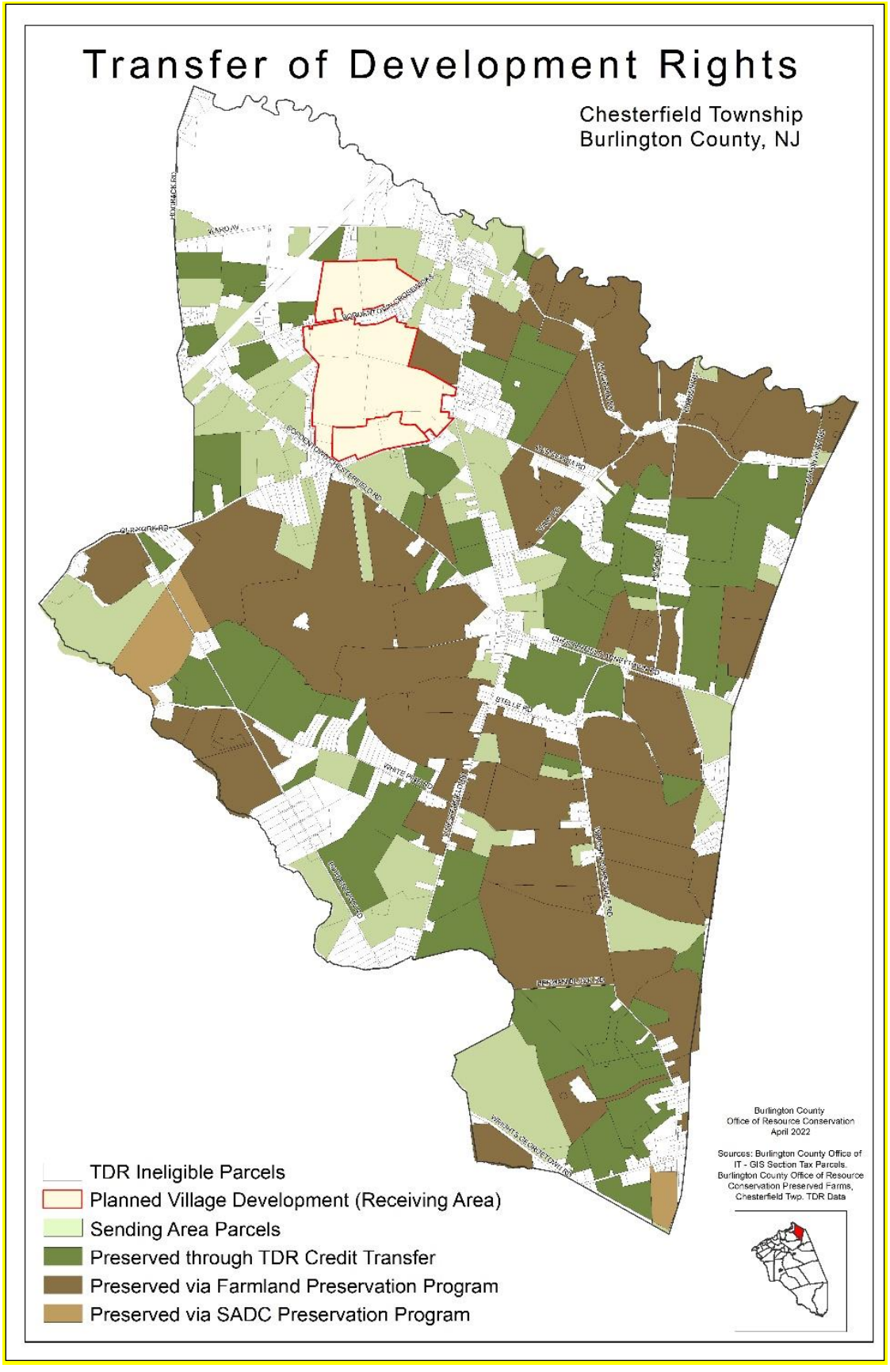
Figure C below represents the number of acres preserved by calendar year by the County's FPP since 1985.



Source: Burlington County Department of Resource Conservation

As a result of the County's policy to assist municipalities implement TDR programs, an additional **3,687 acres** of farmland are protected from non-agricultural uses in Chesterfield and Lumberton Townships (See Appendix C and the following maps).




Transfer of Development Rights
Chesterfield Township
Burlington County, NJ
TDR Ineligible Parcels
Planned Village Development (Receiving Area)
Sending Area Parcels
Preserved through TDR Credit Transfer
Preserved via Farmland Preservation Program
Preserved via SADC Preservation Program
Burlington County
Office of Resource Conservation
April 2022
Sources: Burlington County Office of IT - GIS Section Tax Parcels.
Burlington County Office of Resource Conservation Preserved Farms,
Chesterfield Twp. TDR Data

State Programs (Direct Easement Purchase and Fee Simple)

These programs are administered directly by the SADC. The SADC directly purchases development easements or farmland outright (in fee simple) from landowners under its State Acquisition Program. Funds for these purchases come from the GSPT.

Descriptions of these SADC facilitated programs can be found on the SADC's website at: http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/programs.

Acreage preserved by the SADC is equally distributed between the Direct Easement and Fee-Simple Programs, totaling **2,591 acres** (See Appendix C). The SADC is responsible for monitoring state-held easements.

The SADC continues to pursue direct easement purchases and, in limited circumstances, the fee-simple acquisition of farms.

Non-Profit Farmland Preservation Efforts

The SADC provides grants to nonprofit organizations to fund up to 50 percent of the fee simple or development easement values on farms to ensure their permanent preservation. A description of this SADC facilitated program can be found at:

http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/programs/nonprofit.html

The County is currently partnering with the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) on the preservation of the Pepper Farm in Woodland Township. The Pepper Farm is not located within an SADC approved Project Area, thus the County is not eligible to obtain SADC cost-share for this acquisition. However, NJCF was able to secure funding through the SADC. NJCF then requested that the County provide cost-share to offset the balance remaining after SADC funds are obtained. If the NJCF is successful in preserving this farm the County will then assume ownership and enforcement authority of the easement. The CADB and the Board of County Commissioners fully support this cooperative effort and look forward to other similar collaborative efforts in the future.

Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) Program[11]

PDC program was developed after the adoption of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, which covers more than 1 million acres in southern New Jersey. Very large lot zoning (1 unit per 39 acres) was created for the Agricultural Preservation and Special Agricultural Preservation areas. Farmland owners subsequently faced significant restrictions on the use of their land and an ensuing drop in farmland value.

The PDC program was designed to provide a way for those landowners in the highly restricted parts of the region to share in the development value to be achieved in the areas designated for growth. PDCs were allocated to farmland in the Agricultural Production and Special Agricultural Production Areas. Each PDC was worth four (4) development rights (4.9 acres per right). Landowners had to file an application with the New Jersey Pinelands Commission (NJPC) to determine how many rights their property warranted.

By 1985, very few PDCs had been put up for sale or traded. One reason for this was that residential and commercial development could proceed in the growth areas at the base densities already in place without requiring purchase of PDCs. Because there was little or

[11] Parts excerpted from Heinrich-Shilling Joint Venture (2004), Agriculture in Burlington County's Farmbelt: Current Industry Status and Trends

no market for the credits, the PDC Bank was created to "step in and purchase credits from Pinelands landowners when a quick sale is needed and the private market is not responding (Ross, 2000)." A minimum purchase price of $2,500 per right, or $10,000 per credit was set at that time. The PDC Bank, however, could only buy credits if there was "extreme hardship." Over the last 15 years this program has been relatively inactive. One could deduce that this is a reflection of the successful efforts of landowners to preserve their properties through the private sale of PDCs or through traditional Farmland Preservation Programs.

The following table is excerpted from the NJ PDC Bank 2021 Annual report to show a region-wide perspective on preservation through the PDC Program.

Table 7

PINELANDS DEVELOPMENT CREDIT PROGRAM
MUNICIPAL ACRES PRESERVED - SENDING AREAS
THROUGH FISCAL YEAR 2021

MUNICIPALITY	TOTAL ACRES PRESERVED	PINELANDS MANAGEMENT AREA		
		PAD	APA	SAPA
Barnegat Township	168	168	0	0
Bass River Township	3,494	2,201	0	1,293
Buena Borough	272	0	272	0
Buena Vista Township	453	0	453	0
Estell Manor City	709	0	709	0
Folsom Borough	6	0	6	0
Franklin Township	1,255	0	1,255	0
Galloway Township	581	223	359	0
Hamilton Township	297	0	297	0
Hammonton Town	1,840	0	1,696	144
Lacey Township	6,810	6,810	0	0
Little Egg Harbor Township	1,459	1,459	0	0
Manchester Township	428	428	0	0
Medford Township	291	291	0	0
Monroe Township	336	0	336	0
Mullica Township	569	197	372	0
Ocean Township	29	29	0	0
Pemberton Township	4,210	1,043	3,026	141
Shamong Township	955	381	425	149
Southampton Township	3,144	0	3,144	0
Stafford Township	265	265	0	0
Tabernacle Township	4,517	1,914	451	2,151
Vineland City	166	0	166	0
Washington Township	1,606	1,587	0	19
Waterford Township	371	38	333	0
Winslow Township	709	0	709	0
Woodland Township	20,646	7,299	0	13,346
TOTAL ACRES PRESERVED	55,583	24,333	14,007	17,243

This table and the information contained in Appendix C shows another **31,250 acres** have been preserved through the PDC Program in the Agricultural Production and Special Agricultural Production Areas of the New Jersey Pinelands. (See Appendix C.) There are clear limitations in the PDC data, as it is difficult at this time to understand exactly how much of the farmland in this area is still in agricultural production. It is assumed that a majority of this land will remain in agricultural production into the future, especially if the industry of agriculture remains viable and the property tax incentives for agricultural production remain in place.

Since the PDC Program is market driven (I.E., linked to real estate, housing, and economic market's trends) there have been historic upward and downward trends in PDC values. Beginning in 2004, an upward trend in the value of PDCs began, peaking at steady

per quarter credit prices over $30,000 through 2004 until mid-2006. Prior to 2003, quarter credits were selling for under $10,000. Credit prices began to fall with the rate of development slowing in the Pinelands and statewide, leading to a per quarter credit PDC value under $20,000 by the end of 2008.

Beginning in mid 2021 PDC values and the number of PDC transactions have increased significantly. Recent sales information as provided by the PDC Bank have shown an increase in 'per right' values. Since October of 2021 PDCs have been valued in the range of $22,000-$25,000.

Burlington County Purchase of Pinelands Development Credits

After the creation of the Pinelands National Reserve in 1978, the Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders in cooperation with the New Jersey Pinelands Commission helped to create the Pinelands Development Credit Bank Board. The goal of this effort was to help establish and maintain a level of equity among landowners within the newly formed Pinelands Region. As part of this effort The Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders afforded landowners the ability to sell their Pinelands Development Credits directly to the County for a flat fee of $20,000 per PDC. In exchange for this compensation a permanent easement was placed on the land. This easement served as the template for the traditional Farmland Preservation Program to be established in 1985.

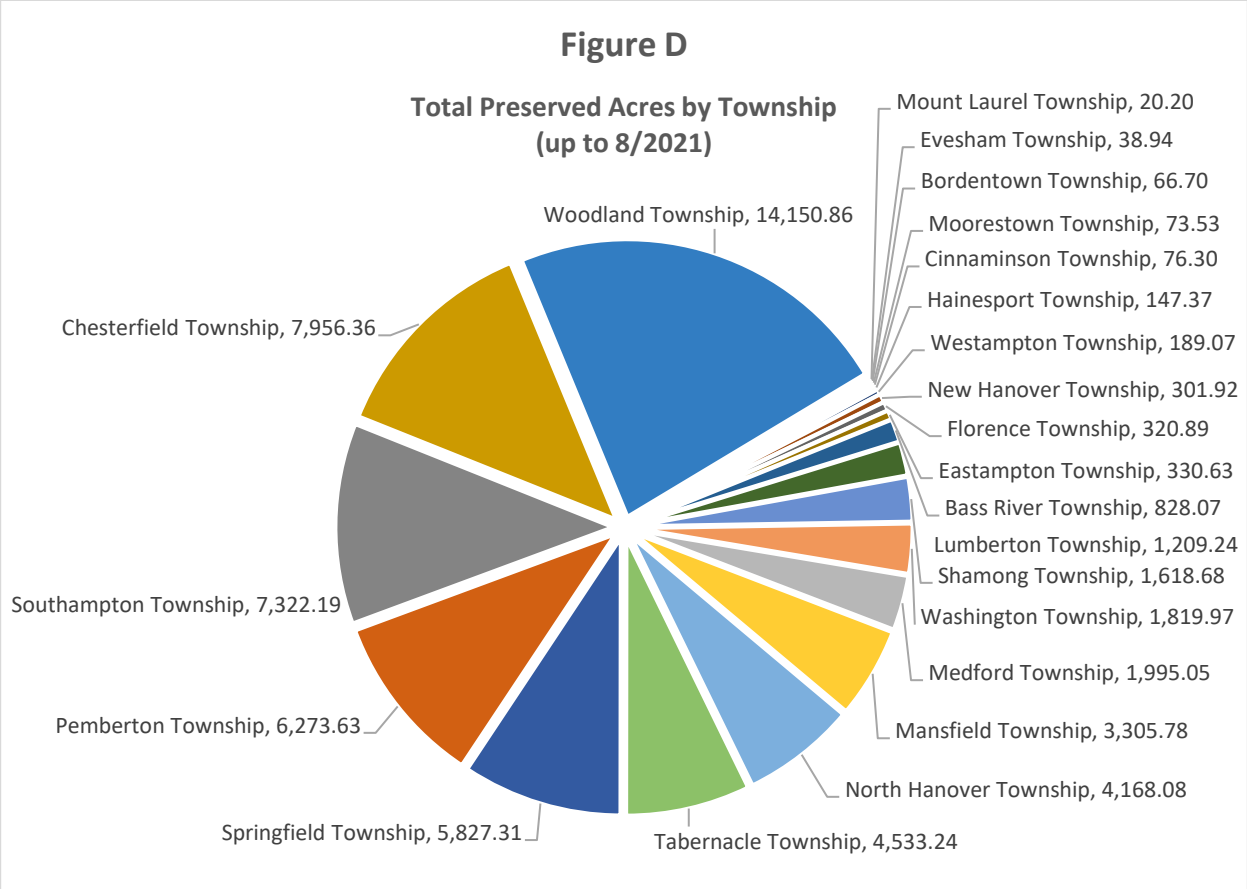
In 1979 the County purchased the first of these PDCs through this program and the County continued this effort through 1985. 19 properties, totaling 3,147 acres were preserved through this program.

Current Status – All Farmland Preservation Programs

The current status of farmland preservation efforts in Burlington County is included in Appendix C. This table summarizes all of the farmland preservation programs active in Burlington County. The table is separated by Township and in the columns, by specific program. This table shows that roughly **63,000 acres** of farmland have been preserved in Burlington County. The farms preserved directly by Burlington County through easement purchase or fee-simple acquisition are summarized in the table in the appendix entitled "Preserved Farms Listing." 63,000 acres represents approximately **65 percent** of the farmland acres reported by the 2017 Census of Agriculture (96,256 acres).

Appendix C provides a breakdown, by program of each Burlington County's partner municipalities.

Figure D represents the distribution of these roughly 63,000 acres throughout the County.



According to the Farmland Preservation Report, Burlington County has the largest County-run FPP in New Jersey and ranks in the top ten in the nation. Current preservation acres equal a total of **63,039 preserved acres or about 98 square miles.**

Equally important, is the success of the County's FPP in achieving preservation of contiguous blocks of preserved farmland. In the University of Nebraska's Case Study of Burlington County, the author considered the ***"Degree of Contiguity Achieved"*** as an indicator of the County's ability to create and build on 1,000 acre blocks of preserved farmland. This case study stated that "besides preserving a large quantity of farmland, Burlington's program is notable for another, related achievement. Most of the protected parcels are contiguous with other protected land rather than being isolated tracts. Stand-alone parcels may be more expensive to farm (e.g., farther for farm equipment to travel) and/or more vulnerable to the constraints resulting from non-farmer neighbors' complaints.[12]"

The author of the case study reviewed mapping prepared by the DRC and concluded that:

"a total of 279 tax parcels preserved through PDR (purchase of development rights), another 29 protected through Chesterfield Township's transfer of development rights program (TDR -- to be discussed just below) and over 850 more acres preserved through Lumberton Township's TDR program. ***More than two-thirds (68.8***

[12] Essexs, p. 29

percent) *of the 279 PDR parcels were adjacent to other PDR parcels that did not have the same owners."*

The author also credited the County with another "laudable" achievement related to the extent to which the map shows large clusters of contiguous protected parcels stating that:

"Chesterfield Township in the north of the county had a cluster totaling 79 parcels, if included in that count are the PDR parcels next to one or more of its 29 TDR tracts. Only eight of the overall 87 parcels protected by the two programs in Chesterfield were stand-alones. Mansfield Township had a cluster of 15 tracts; and Springfield, 13."

Burlington County's FPP remains active. Currently there are 5 farms 'in application'. Assuming that these farms close as planned, by the end of 2023 an additional 380 acres will be added to the preserved list.

Burlington County is actively soliciting applications for farmland preservation from owners of the qualified farmland described in Appendix F.

Term Easement Preservation Programs (Formerly the 8-Year Program)

The Term Easement FPP is a cost sharing program for soil and water conservation projects, in which the farmer receives 50 percent cost sharing for these projects as well as protection against emergency energy and water restrictions and eminent domain. In return, the farmer signs an agreement that restricts the land to agricultural use for a minimum of eight years and a maximum of 16 years. For entrance into this program and to qualify for benefits, a farm must be located within an ADA. Technical assistance for the soil and water practices is provided by the NRCS.

In recent years, enrollment in the Term Easement program has decreased. On February 27, 2020 the SADC updated Policy P-48. This update allowed farms that have been preserved through the sale of PDCs to become automatically eligible for the Soil and Water Conservation Cost-Share funding. Previously the vast majority of Term Easement Enrollments were comprised of these PDC preserved properties.

In Burlington County, there are 5 farms enrolled in the Term Easement program. All of these farms are in the Pinelands.

County Policies – Consistency with other Policies / Plans

The following County FPP-related policies are included in Appendix F:

- ADA Criteria
- ATL Criteria
- Priority Farm Criteria
- Approval of Exceptions Areas from Farmland Preservation Applications
- Approval of Municipal PIG Applications
- Financial Policies

Only farms that are in the County's ADA and meet the County's ATL criteria (Priority or Alternate) will be solicited and processed, subject to the availability of funding. If funding is limited in the future, priority farms will be solicited and processed ahead of alternate farms. The ATL is not intended to be a tool to determine which farmland preservation program best suits an individual farm. Determinations of priority between easement and

fee-simple (emergency) acquisitions will be made on a case-by-case and year-by-year basis by the Board of County Commissioners based on the recommendation of the CADB.

The ATL represents the list of farms that the County's FPP wishes to see preserved using the programs available that best meet the needs and situations of each individual landowner. As discussed in a later chapter of this Plan, the Board of County Commissioners and CADB reserves the right to not process an application from a landowner on the County's ATL if the municipality the farm is in does not have a Right to Farm (RTF) ordinance that is not substantially consistent with the SADC's model RTF ordinance.

SADC Minimum Eligibility Requirements

The County recognizes that the SADC has adopted minimum eligibility criteria for farms proposed for farmland preservation grants. These requirements can be found at *N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20*. These minimum eligibility criteria relate to all farms proposed for funding through the SADC, no matter the program. The minimum criteria relevant to the Burlington County FPP can be found at N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20(a) 2 (lands greater than 10 acres). The criteria is based on the following:

i. At least 50 percent of the land, or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, is tillable;
ii. At least 50 percent of the land, or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, consists of soils that are capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production; and
iii. The land must exhibit development potential based on the standards that appear in the SADC regulations.

Burlington County will continue to utilize its ATL list as the primary targeting list for interest in farmland preservation. At the time of application, the County will review each farm critically and work with the SADC staff to confirm that each farm meets the SADC's new minimum standards. An initial review of the County's ATL farms indicated that there are no farms on the County's ATL that do not meet the SADC new minimum standards EXCEPT certain Pinelands farms that may have difficulty meeting the minimum score requirements, established yearly by the SADC based on the scores of the previous three years of County applications.

Only farms that are in the County's ADA and meet the County's ATL criteria (Priority or Alternate) will be solicited and processed, subject to available funding. If funding is limited in the future, priority farms will be solicited and processed ahead of Alternate farms. Determinations of priority between easement and fee-simple (emergency) acquisitions will be made on a case-by-case and year-by-year basis.

The County's FPP retains the ability to proceed with farms it deems worthy no matter if the farm meets the SADC's minimum requirement or not. The CADB will advise the Board of County Commissioners when farms do not meet these new minimum standards and will jointly make the final decision as to whether to proceed without SADC funding.

SADC Minimum Score Requirements

The County recognizes that the SADC has adopted minimum ranking score requirements for farms proposed for farmland preservation grant. These minimum score requirements are within the context of the County PIG Program and can be found at N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.

Eligible farms under this program are defined as *"a targeted farm that qualified for grant funding under this subchapter by receiving an individual rank score pursuant N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.16 that is* ***equal to or greater than 70 percent of the county's average quality score of all farms granted preliminary approval*** *by the Committee through the county easement purchase program and/or the county planning incentive grant program within the* ***previous three fiscal years****, as determined by the Committee."*

Policy P-13 E establishes the SADC's ranking criteria and will be the evaluation tool relevant to establishing farms meeting the above definition of an "eligible" farm.

This policy can be found at:

http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/rules/P14eprioritizationofprojectareaspdf.pdf

Minimum ranking scores will be established by the SADC for each county annually. The minimum score for FY 2022 funding has been established as 47.00. The annual minimum score is related to the average score for applications in the past three (3) funding rounds. Limited exceptions will be issued by the SADC on a case by case basis.

A copy of SADC Policy P-14-E is included in Appendix H.

Post-Closing Policies Related to Preserved Farms

The County generally defaults to all SADC policies for post-closing actions on preserved farms:

Construction of Agricultural Labor Units

Description: Owners of preserved farms are entitled to construct agricultural labor housing units on the preserved farm, subject to the conditions of each individual deed restriction and the approval the CADB, Freeholder Board and when relevant, the SADC.

Replacement of Pre-Existing Residential Structures

Description: Owners of preserved farms are entitled to replace pre-existing residential structures on a preserved farm, subject to the conditions of each individual deed restriction and the approval of the CADB, Freeholder Board and when relevant, the SADC.

Exercising Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities (RDSOs)

Description: Owners of certain preserved farms are entitled to construct a limited number of new residential structures on the preserved farm, subject to the conditions of each individual deed restriction and the approval the CADB, Freeholder Board and when relevant, the SADC. Allocation of RDSOs takes place during the application process. RDSOs have been allocated to applicants at a density not to exceed one unit per 100 acres, including existing dwellings.

SADC Policy P-31 (Exercising a RDSO) can be found at:

http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/rules/

Division of Preserved Farm

Description: Owners of preserved farms are entitled to legally subdivide a preserved farm, subject to the conditions of each individual deed restriction and the approval the CADB, Board of County Commissioners and when relevant, the SADC. Though the specific terms of the deed restrictions have evolved, typically farmers can only divide preserved farms if there is an agricultural purpose and only if the subdivision results in agriculturally viable parcels.

SADC Policy P-30-A (Division of Permanently Preserved Farmland) can be found at:

http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/rules/

Approval of Septic Systems on Preserved Farm Areas

Description: The SADC has adopted a policy regarding the location of septic systems that service residential and agricultural uses located within exception areas.

SADC Policy P-49 (Placement of Septic Systems to Service Residential and Agricultural Uses Located on Exception Areas) can be found at:

http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/rules/

Commercial Opportunities Permits / Wireless Communication Permits

Description: This is a new opportunity that proposes to allow certain owners of preserved Farm to have new small scale non-agricultural uses developed on preserved farms. These opportunities are likely to be very limited in scope and scale as the language contained in the authorizing legislation provides is very narrow. The SADC has adopted rules to implement the legislation that created this opportunity. The SADC has primary jurisdiction for issuing these permits.

SADC Regulations (Subchapter 22 and 23) govern the approval of these permits. The SADC regulations governing these permits can be found at:

http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/rules/

The County has developed several of its own policies. The CADB policies can be found in **Appendix H**. In general, the CADB will accept requests to except and/or subdivide acreage from an applicant property up to a maximum total acreage of five (5) percent or ten (10) acres, whichever is less. This policy includes restrictions to be added to the standard provisions of the Deed of Easement (DOE) in the event that an applicant wishes to provide for one of these areas on their preserved farm.

The CADB encourages applicants to consider excepting out pre-existing non-agricultural uses and agricultural services that may be now or into the future monitoring issues if the farm is preserved.

Current Administrative Capacity

Administratively, Burlington County's FPP is housed within the Burlington County Department of Resource Conservation (DRC). The DRC's other functions includes open space acquisition, park development and management and water resource coordination. The FPP is currently staffed by two (2) full-time employees dedicated solely to the farmland preservation program. Complementing the full time staff, the FPP utilizes outside counsel for legal representation , and is augmented by GIS support staff.

FPP Staff works closely with the EDRP on various Regional, County, and Municipal land-use and economic development projects. FPP Staff, current and former, worked closely in the development of the Rt. 206 Farm Belt Studies, referenced in Chapter III.

Future Direction

In 2020, the CADB formed a subcommittee to assist staff in revising the 2008 Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan. Since the formation of the subcommittee the group met on various occasions to discuss the direction that this updated plan should take. The future direction of the County's program is contained in **Chapter IX of this Plan.**

In general, it is believed that the preservation strategies detailed in the 2008 Plan have been effective in stemming the loss of agricultural land in the county. As such, this Plan recommends that those strategies be continued and adapted as necessary as conditions dictate.

In this Plan, the County is revising preservation goals for the next ten years (2023-2033), as described in Chapter IX. This Plan establishes a 10,000 acre goal with 5,000 acres set to be preserved with public funding and the additional 5,000 acres through innovative zoning and planning measures and the Pinelands Development Credit Program. If this goal is attained, by 2032 the County will have almost **45,000 acres** of farmland preserved through the various acquisition programs and including PDC easements, will have roughly **73,000** acres under easement (+/- 75 percent of the active agricultural land that currently remains in Burlington County).

FPP staff continue to evaluate the ATL on a yearly basis and, in conjunction with feedback from each municipality, the ATL is modified as needed. All changes to the ATL are provided to the SADC as part of the annual PIG application process.

The FPP continues to focus preservation efforts within four project areas:

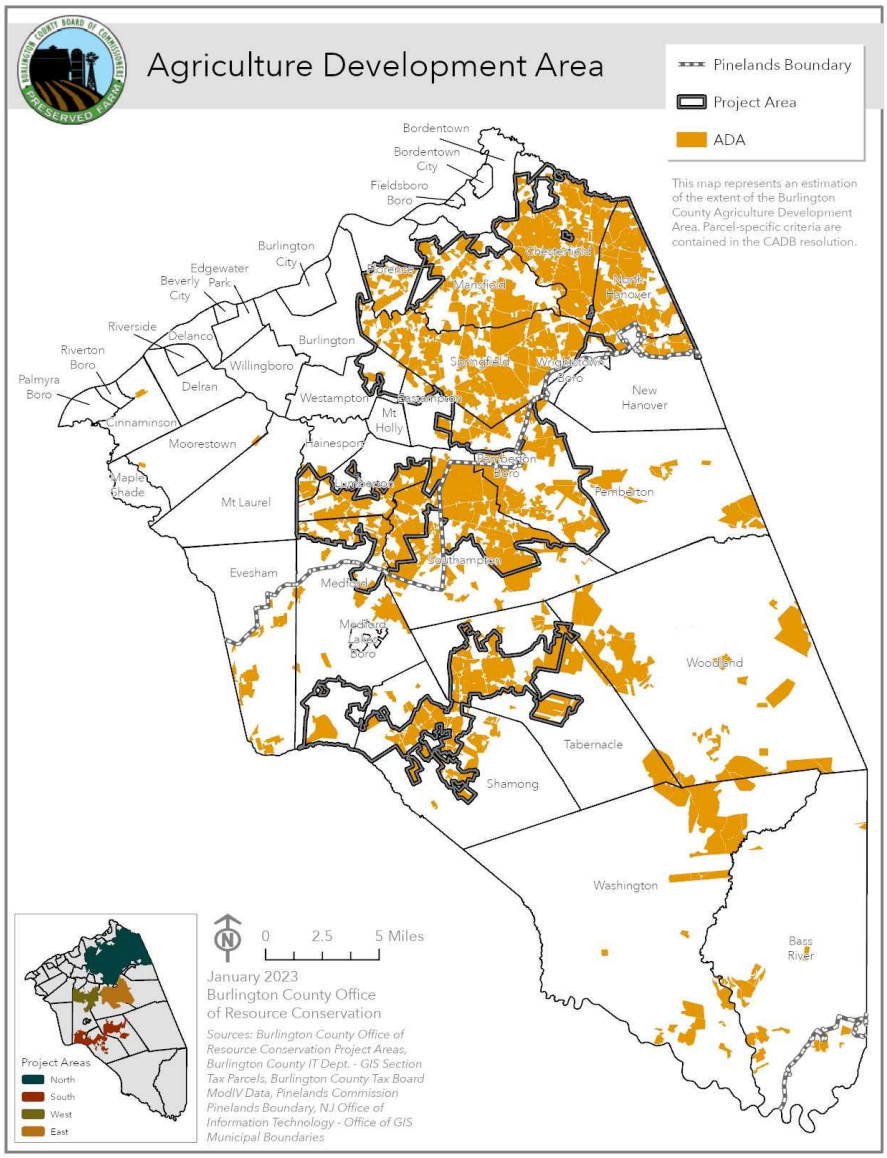
- North Project Area
- West Project Area
- East Project Area
- South Project Area

The **North Project Area** covers significant portions of Chesterfield, North Hanover, Mansfield, Springfield, the remaining agricultural areas of Florence, New Hanover and strategic areas of Westampton and Eastampton Townships. The North Project Area contains the most preserved farmland and target farms (see Appendix G). This project area, in fact, forms the western boundary of a four-county regional project area which the SADC refers to as the Central Jersey Project Area. Upper Freehold and western Millstone Township's project area is surrounded by preserved farmland in Burlington, Mercer and Ocean counties.

The **West Project Area** covers the southern portion of Lumberton Township, the non-Pinelands agricultural areas west of Rt. 206 in Southampton Township, northern Medford Township (with portions in the Pinelands Regional Growth Area) and a small section of Hainesport Township. A description of this project area is contained in Appendix G.

The **East Project Area** contains portions of Southampton and Pemberton Township that are within the jurisdiction of the NJPC. A description of this project area is contained in Appendix G. This project area is roughly the extent of the Pinelands Fringe Project Area, previously approved in the old County PIG Program.

The **South Project Area** contains portions of Medford, Shamong, Tabernacle, Southampton and Pemberton Township that are within the jurisdiction of the NJPC. A description of this project area is contained in Appendix G. This project area consolidates portions of the Pinelands Fringe and Rancocas Project Areas, previously approved in the old County PIG Program.



A detailed Status Map containing all Project Areas (including farms already preserved and farms targeted for future preservation) is included in Appendix E.

In addition, the CADB recognizes that there are farms in urban areas of the County that serve unique and important functions to the local residents. There are three urban farms preserved, the former Winner Farm (Moorestown / Mt. Laurel Twps), the Hunter Family Farm (Cinnaminson Township,) and the Browning-Hess Farm (Moorestown Twp). Additional farms of this nature will be considered by the CADB on a case-by-case basis. Farms not in an approved SADC project area will not be eligible for state funding under the County PIG Program unless the SADC approved a new or amended project area.

Factors Limiting Farmland Preservation Implementation

The list below represents the percieved factors limiting farmland preservation implemention:

- Landowner Interest
- Land Supply
- Administrative Resources
- Funding
- Projected Costs

Since long-term funding has now been secured at both the County and State levels, funding is no longer the most limiting factor in the acqusition of Farmland Preservation Program Easements. Landowner interest, especially among those landowners outside of the Pinelands region, has decreased significantly since the adoption of the 2008 plan. Offers for preservation outside of the Pinelands region have been lower than in years past. This is a reflection of market forces and the overall lack of demand for residential development on larger lots (2-5 acres). Landowners have consistently informed FPP staff that they would rather wait for land values to increase before considering preservation of their farms.

The supply of available quality farmland for preservation is not currently an issue, though due to previous successes the number of farms on our ATL is significantly lower than what was included in the 2008 Plan.

Administrative resources will always be a challenge. Currently the County's FPP staff faces challenges in the monitoring and enforcement of the more than 250 preserved farm easements held by Burlington County. Existing staff members continue to implement internal effiency-based measures so that more can be accomplished with exsiting resources.

Chapter IX includes specifific strategies related to reaching established goals related to the preservation of farmland in Burlington County. These strategies are related to ***Goal #1*** of this Plan, the preservation of an **additional 10,000 acres** of farmland in Burlington County over the next 10 years usings various farmland presevation tools.

Chapter III
Supporting Studies

This section of the Plan is intended to provide a description of previous and on-going studies that greatly impacted the development of this Plan and guided the recommendations contained in Section IX.

Related Burlington County Planning & Technical Studies

Since the adoption of the 2008 Plan there have not been any specific reports conducted related to the agricultural industry within Burlington County. As such, this plan will continue to rely on the studies referenced in the 2008 Plan. A review of those studies and the recommendations contained within confirms that they are, largely, as relevant today as they were in 2008.

Building on the County's national reputation as a leader and innovator in supporting the farm sector, County and local leaders have agreed that economic development initiatives for agriculture must explicitly: (1) stabilize the farmland base to make farmland and other necessary resources available and accessible to future farmers, and (2) promote agricultural economic development and other policies that keep farmers on the land. This consensus was reached in the process of preparing and completing the ***Northern Burlington County Regional Strategic Plan Technical Report – Economic Development and Agriculture (2004) (the "Technical Report.")***

In developing the Technical Report, the County incorporated the thoughts and ideas of thirteen (13) participating municipalities, County leaders, expert consultants, and other partners including the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, the NJDEP, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the NJDA, and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. The Route 206 Farm Belt is defined to include the following 13 municipalities located in the northern part of the Burlington County:

- Bordentown City
- Bordentown Township
- Chesterfield Township
- Eastampton Township
- Fieldsboro Borough
- Mansfield Township
- New Hanover Township
- North Hanover Township
- Pemberton Borough
- Pemberton Township
- Southampton Township
- Springfield Township
- Wrightstown Borough

Though the Northern Burlington County Strategic Plan is scoped to one region of the County, much of the data and analysis was done on the County-level. As such, the recommendations related to economic development and the agriculture sector can be reasonably applied to the ***entire*** county. In addition, a vast majority of the remaining undeveloped and unpreserved agricultural lands outside of the Pinelands is within this study region.

The Technical Report drew primarily from a comprehensive, two-year study of agricultural viability prepared for Burlington County by the Heinrich-Schilling Joint Venture. This study, funded by a Smart Growth Planning Grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Office of Smart Growth resulted in a series of three technical reports.

The **first two reports** provide a foundation of information about Farm Belt farmers, agricultural practices, the challenges farmers face, and the opportunities to shape a viable future for farming in the region:

- A Review of Farm Industry Economics (February 2004) provides a snapshot of the economic aspects of the farm industry in the region.
- Current Industry Status and Trends (December 2004) provides a detailed examination of the agricultural sector in the study area as an industry, a way of life and a land use.

The **third report**, *Strategies for Farm Viability* (December 2004) recommends to officials at the municipal, County, and state levels, and to members of the farm community, 268 actions to promote the viability of agriculture in northern Burlington County.

The Burlington County Department of Economic and Regional Planning, in collaboration with the DRC, selected **59 priority actions** from the Strategies report to begin to implement the twelve-point strategy based on their relatively low cost, high understandability, likely political viability, short implementation timeframe, and favorable response from the local farm community. A 60th priority action regarding an agricultural education opportunity was derived from discussions by this study's Agricultural Viability Task Group. Feedback from the Steering Committee for the Northern Burlington County Regional Strategic Plan resulted in four additional recommended actions.

This Technical Report recommends advancing a **twelve-point strategy** for keeping agriculture economically viable:

> **Preserve the Farmland Base.** Evaluate the demand for leasable land and preferred lease terms; align farmland preservation funding and local right-to-farm provisions to support established goals; use transfer of development rights and other density transfer provisions to preserve farmland while managing growth; assess opportunities for farm owner succession within agriculture.

Retain and Recruit Farmers. Promote and market a positive image of farming in the region; inform college students in farm management of opportunities in Burlington County; match existing farmers with land opportunities; favor active farming in auctions of farm land; sponsor an educational and policy summit for young and beginning farmers with proceedings published on the Internet; promote cross-enrollment of high school students from throughout the county in the Northern Burlington County High School agriculture program, or in satellite programs; provide more opportunities under farmland preservation programs for long-term leasing and custom farming; develop college agriculture-related programs and services at Burlington County College that meet the needs of the agricultural community in Burlington County.

Plan for Agriculture. Collect and adapt model ordinances that support agriculture; include agriculture and agribusiness in County economic development assistance programs; investigate potential use of Urban Enterprise Zones and Special Improvement Districts for agriculture; adopt municipal master plan elements for agricultural preservation and retention; maintain local agricultural advisory committees; envision the short, medium and long-range future of agriculture in the region; water allocation budgeting taking into account the needs of the agricultural community.

Reform Farm Taxation. Reduce property tax assessments for farm employee housing; use estate planning to preserve farms and farming operations; lower the property tax assessment on land under the farmhouse on deed restricted farms; provide New Jersey farmers with a credit against their annual New Jersey gross income tax determined by using income averaging from their farming business.

Address Regulatory Compliance. Add field technical assistance staff to the Soil Conservation District (SCD) to help farmers meet environmental regulations; create and fund a county Agricultural Industry Development Specialist position to advance economic development of production agriculture and support businesses through regulatory compliance assistance.

Encourage Environmental Stewardship. Inform owners of preserved farms and all farm operators of annual conservation funding programs; provide free access to computer software packages that help farmers analyze, compare and evaluate potential business, production and operational impacts of using different sets of farming practices.

Advance Public Education and Awareness about Agriculture. Organize farm tours; develop a regular local newspaper column on agriculture; convene periodic meetings between farmers and county economic development staff to address agriculture industry needs and issues; increase participation of farmers on local and county boards and committees; increase opportunities for the public to learn about New Jersey's farm products and family farms.

Provide Technical and Business Assistance. Organize training seminars for farmers regarding emerging business issues, trends and available resources; maintain a directory of agricultural service providers and suppliers; develop emerging markets for ethnic and organic foods; encourage participation in risk management training.

Provide Financial Assistance. Coordinate with, support and enhance traditional sources of farm capital; incorporate agricultural industries into state economic development and recovery programs; provide incentives such as loan guarantees to private lenders to finance new operations and technologies that have long payback periods.

Promote Agritourism. Organize workshops for farmers and municipal officials to reduce resistance to Agritourism; increase coordination with tourism programs to support Agritourism; promote on-farm educational opportunities in local schools; analyze municipal ordinances for impediments to Agritourism; include farmer representation in planning for recreation facilities and events to protect farm operations from damage.

Develop Value Added and New Markets. Promote complementary agribusinesses that can retain more of the food-marketing dollar within the region's economy; respond to opportunities provided by changing ethnic compositions and consumer preferences in and around New Jersey; pursue federal funding opportunities for market development; pursue farmer educational opportunities with the Food Innovation Center; leverage New Jersey Fresh resources to promote local farm products.

Establish a County Agriculture Industry Development Program. Enhance the visibility and awareness of the region's agriculture sector; promote new market development; integrate agriculture into county and local land use and economic development planning; ombudsman for agriculture industry on issues related to current and pending regulation and policy; promote locally grown farm products; organize farm tours and other educational programs for residents, local officials, and farmers; maintain a full-time Agriculture Industry Development Specialist and a broadly based board of directors for the program.

In association with the Northern Burlington County Smart Growth Program, the following studies were conducted:

- Integrated Water Resources Management Project for the Rt. 206 Corridor (July 2005)

- Rt. 206 Farm Belt Build-out Existing and Infrastructure Analysis (July 2004)

- Northern Burlington County Regional Development Patterns – Technical Report (August 2007)

Other Plans / Studies

- The 2004 / 2005 Burlington County State Plan Cross-Acceptance Report
- U. of Nebraska of Lincoln: Case Study Report – Burlington County, NJ "Farm Viability in Urbanizing Areas"
- July 2006 Staff Report and Recommendations of the Burlington County Community Agricultural Center Working Group
- SADC Strategic Targeting Project
- NJDA– Smart Growth Plan for Agriculture
- 2017 Annual Report – NJPC Long-Term Monitoring Program
- Pinelands Development Credit Bank – Annual Report 2021

Chapter IV
Agricultural Land Base

This section of the Plan is intended to provide a clear description of the agricultural characteristics and trends within Burlington County, specifically over the last 30 years. This information was generated primarily from the reports entitled *"Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends (2004)" and "A Review of Farm Industry Economics (2004)."* Burlington County's well-defined "farm belt" spans a thirteen-municipality region traversed by U.S. Route 206 in the northeastern portion of the county.

Although these reports focused on this agriculturally significant thirteen-municipality region, a majority of the analysis contained in the report was conducted at the County-level. As such, these reports are incorporated by reference and portions of this section have been duplicated ***directly from these reports***.

Location and Size of Burlington County's Agricultural Land Base

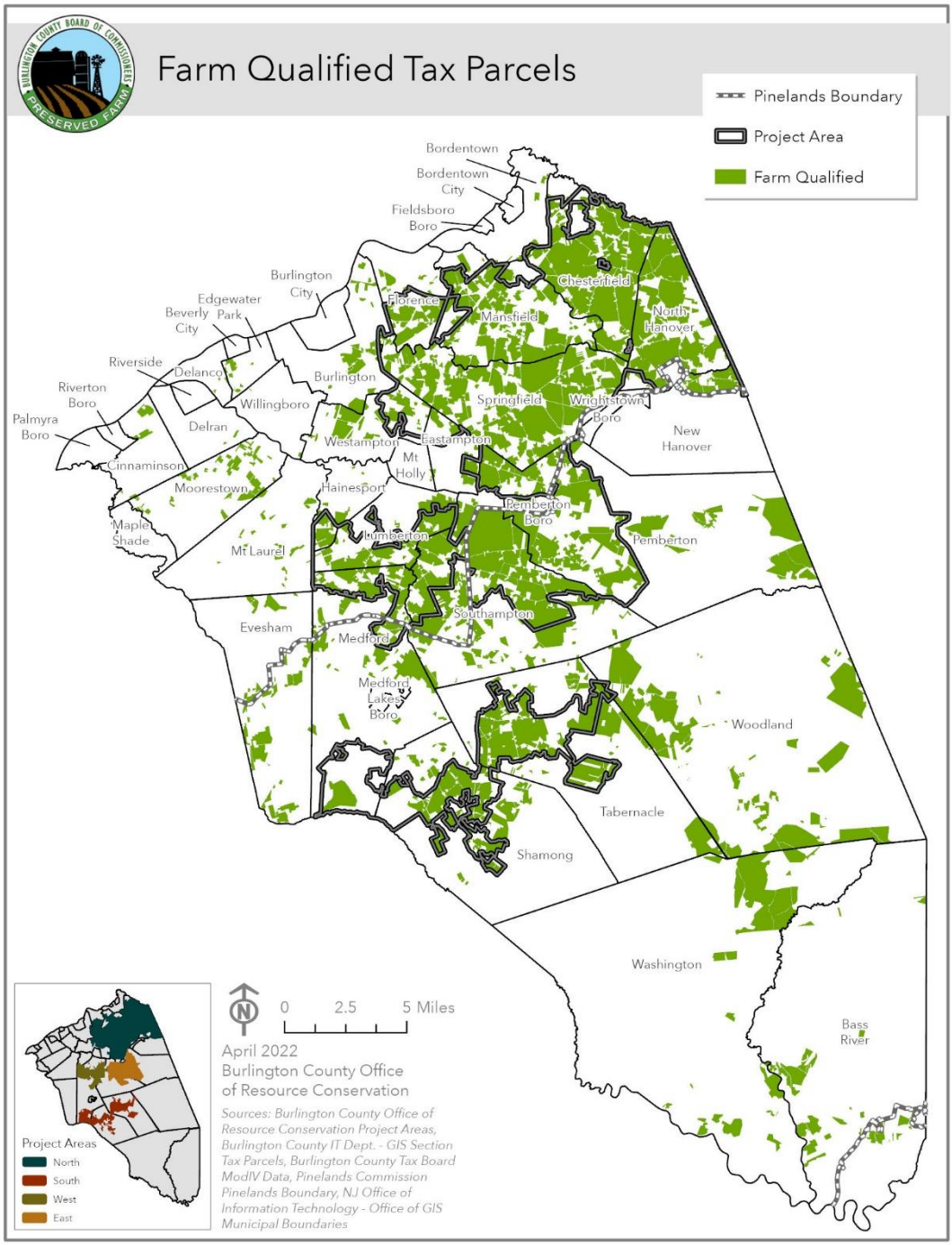
Table 8
Burlington County Area (Acreage) in Farmland

Year	Land in Farms (Acres)	% of Area in Farms	% of State Land in Farms
2017	96,256	18%	13%
2012	95,899	18%	13%
2007	85,790	16%	12%
2002	111,237	21%	14%
1997	103,667	20%	12%
1992	97,186	16%	11%
1987	103,224	20%	12%
1982	112,689	21%	12%

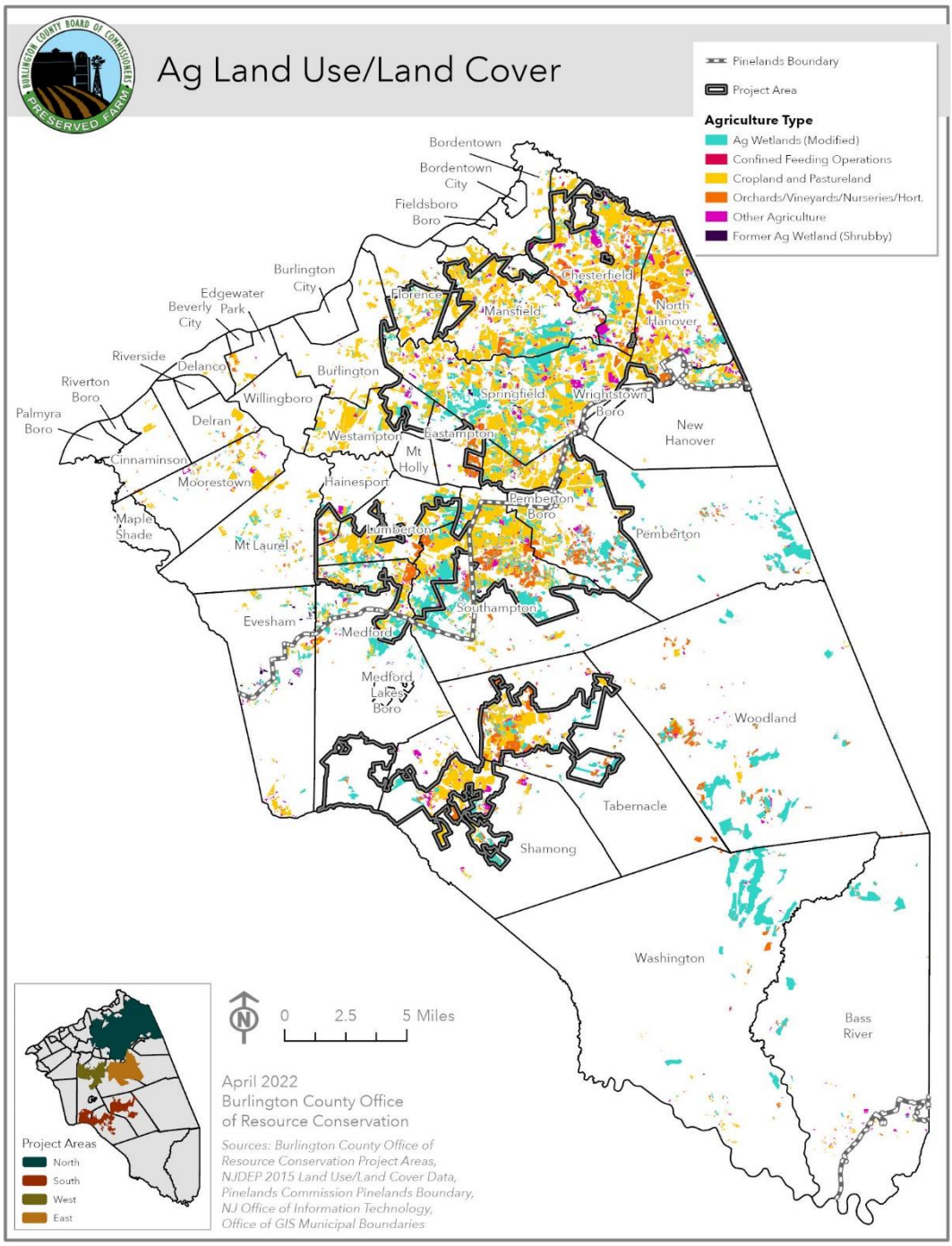
Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, various years.

According to U.S. Census of Agriculture data, since 1982 the amount of agricultural land in Burlington County has decreased significantly (Table 8).

The location of the County's agricultural land base is illustrated in the following map of all the farmland qualified properties in Burlington County. Project area descriptions (further described in this Plan) have been added to represent the County's geographic foci on farmland preservation.



To further illustrate the location of the County's agricultural land base the following map is provided depicting land cover classifications based on NJDEP Land Use / Land Cover data (2022). Project area descriptions (further described in this Plan) have been added to represent the County's geographic foci on farmland preservation. 2017 Census of Agriculture data shows that of the County's total land in farms area (96,256 acres), 52 percent of that land is classified as Cropland, 7 percent is Pastureland, 26 percent is Woodland, and 15 percent is in other use.



For further information on Burlington County's Agricultural Land Base, see Part 2.7 and Part 3.2 of the *Current Industry Status and Trends* Report (December 2004)

Distribution of Soil Types and their Characteristics

The NRCS conducts soil surveys in each state to inventory existing soil resources. Information compiled includes maps characterizing and showing the locations of key soil types, as well as data on the physical and chemical properties of such soils. From this information it is possible to determine potential problems and limitations associated with alternative land uses. Soil surveys are a useful tool for gathering information necessary to guide efforts to protect water quality, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. They are also the basis for predicting erosion problems, potential for ground water contamination, and suitability for cultivation. Soil surveys, while a valuable resource, are generally not precise enough to be used for making site-specific land use or regulatory decisions. Information on soils contained in this Plan is based on the Burlington County, New Jersey Soil Survey performed by the USDA Soil Conservation Service (the predecessor of NRCS) and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.

Soil Capability

The NRCS *land capability classification system* (LCCS) can be used to understand the production potential and erodibility of farmland. *Capability classes* are the broadest groupings of land and are designated by Roman numerals I through VIII. Limitations on land use increase with higher numbers.

Table 9
Definitions of LCCS classes

LCCS Class	Definition of LCCS Class
I	Few limitations
II	Moderate limitations that require limited conservation practices
III	Severe limitations that require special conservation practices
IV	Very severe limitations that require careful management
V	Soils are not likely to erode, but have other limitations, impractical to remove
VI	Severe limitations that make soils generally unsuitable for cultivation
VII	Very severe limitations that make soils unsuitable for cultivation
VIII	Soils with limitations that nearly preclude their use for commercial crop production

The concentration of agricultural activity in the Farm Belt, as noted earlier, is tied to the quality of the region's soils. While the Farm Belt represents only **29 percent** of Burlington County's total area, it has **44 percent** of the County's soils classified under Capability Classes I and II, soils considered generally well suited for agricultural production [Table 13]. When urban lands are excluded, the Farm Belt accounts for an even higher proportion, **49 percent**, of the county's remaining available Class I and II soils. The distribution of Class I and II soils within the Farm Belt is shown in Table 10 **The County's past and future farmland preservation efforts consider Class I and II soils the greatest priority for permanent protection.**

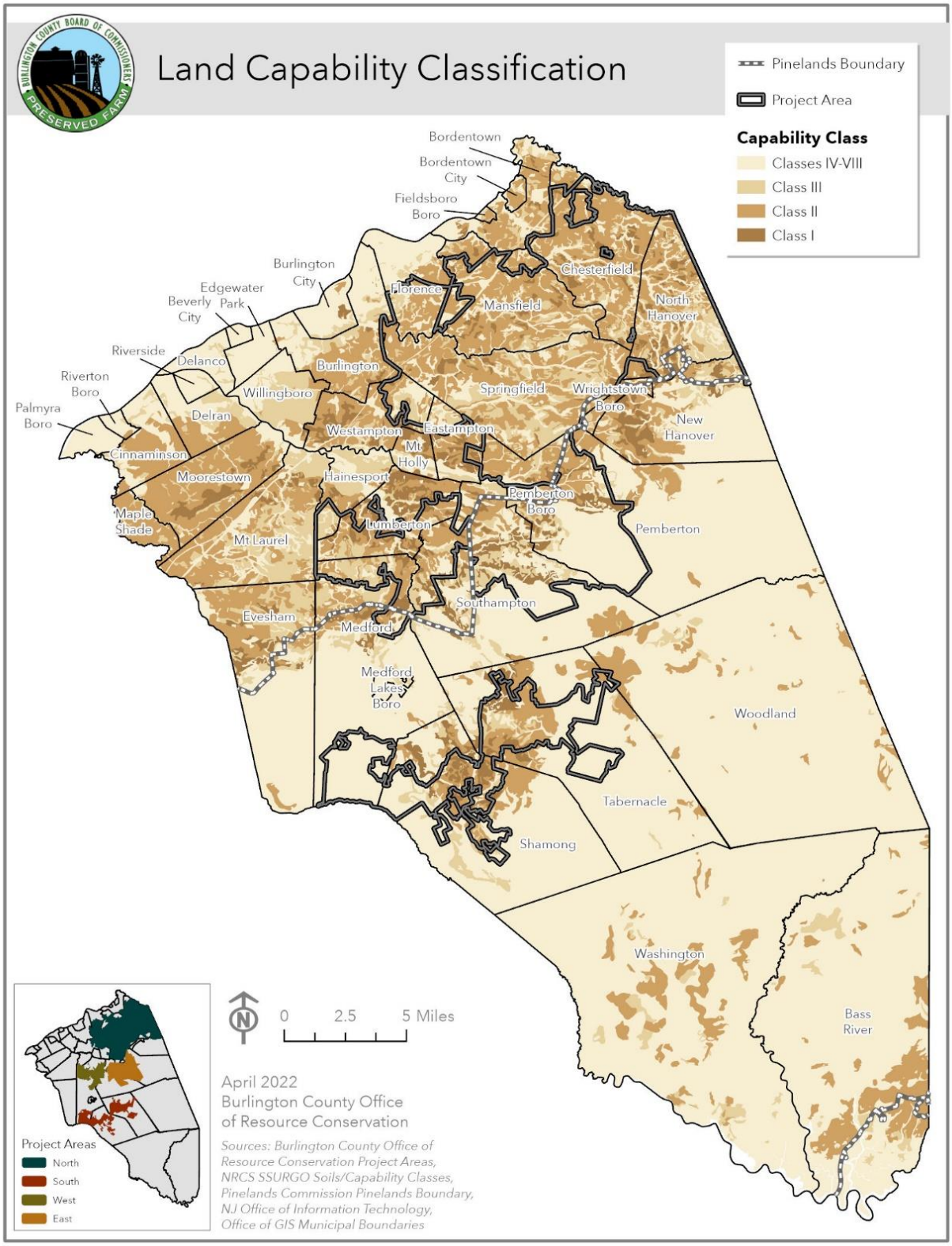
Table 10

Distribution of Class I and II Soils Across Land Uses in the Farm Belt and Burlington County.

	Non-Urban Land Uses			All Land Uses		
Capability Class	Farm Belt	Burlington County	Farm Belt as % of County	Farm Belt	Burlington County	Farm Belt as % of County
I	7,546	14,403	52%	11,048	22,789	48%
IIE	13,767	19,642	70%	18,436	29,967	62%
IIS	3,867	19,444	20%	5,135	24,680	21%
IIW	21,869	42,077	52%	25,875	59,386	44%
Total	**47,049**	**95,566**	**49%**	**60,494**	**136,821**	**44%**

Source: Soil Survey Geographic database, NRCS, USDA.

The location of the County's Land Capability Class I and II soils is illustrated in the following map of Burlington County. Project area descriptions (further described in this Plan) have been added to represent the County's geographic foci on farmland preservation.


Land Capability Classification
Pinelands Boundary
Project Area
Capability Class
Classes IV-VIII
Class III
Class II
Class I
Bordentown
Bordentown City
Fieldsboro Boro
Burlington City
Edgewater Park
Beverly City
Riverside
Delanco
Riverton Boro
Palmyra Boro
Willingboro
Burlington
Florence
Mansfield
Chesterfield
North Hanover
Springfield
Wrightstown Boro
New Hanover
Delran
Westampton
Eastampton
Mt Holly
Cinnaminson
Moorestown
Hainesport
Pemberton Boro
Pemberton
Maple Shade
Mt Laurel
Lumberton
Southampton
Evesham
Medford
Medford Lakes Boro
Woodland
Tabernacle
Shamong
Washington
Bass River
Project Areas
North
South
West
East
0
2.5
5 Miles
April 2022
Burlington County Office
of Resource Conservation
Sources: Burlington County Office of Resource Conservation Project Areas, NRCS SSURGO Soils/Capability Classes, Pinelands Commission Pinelands Boundary, NJ Office of Information Technology, Office of GIS Municipal Boundaries

Soil Productivity

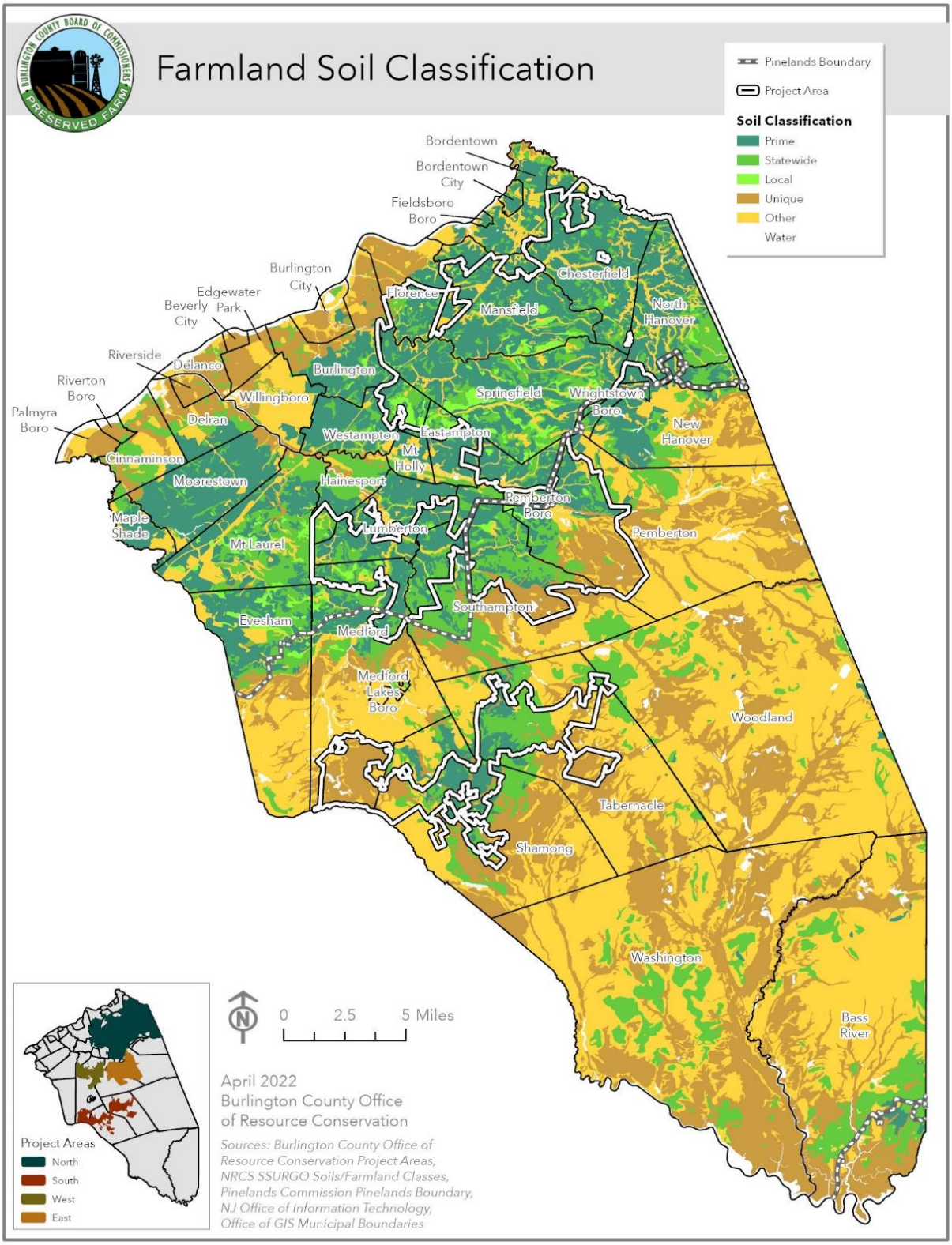
The NRCS[13] classifies certain soils as *prime*, *statewide important* or *unique* based on their agricultural productivity. **Prime farmland** soils rest on land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. They have the quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Prime soils are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either flood infrequently or are protected from flooding.

Farmland soils of Statewide Importance produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, but have yields that are not as high as **Prime soils**. **Unique soils** exhibit specific qualities that may be favorable to the production of specialized crops. Soils of **local importance** are not mapped or designated by NRCS as agricultural soils, but exhibit viability for the production of field crops, hay, livestock pasturing, and some fruits and vegetables. **The County's past and future farmland preservation efforts consider soils of Prime and Statewide Importance the greatest priority for permanent protection.**

Only 20 percent of Burlington County's soils (105,563 acres) are considered Prime agricultural land. In contrast, 37 percent of soils in the Farm Belt region (56,326 acres) is classified as Prime [Table 11]. Therefore, 53 percent of all Prime farmland soils in the county are found within this region, a region comprising only 29 percent of total County acreage.

The location of the County's Prime, Statewide, Local, and Unique soils is illustrated in the following map of Burlington County. Project area descriptions (further described in this Plan) have been added to represent the County's geographic foci on farmland preservation.

[13] For more information on the classification of soils for agricultural use, see the Natural Resources Conservation Service (New Jersey office) website at:
http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/soils/njfarmindex.html


Farmland Soil Classification
Pinelands Boundary
Project Area
Soil Classification
Prime
Statewide
Local
Unique
Other
Water
Bordentown
Bordentown City
Fieldsboro Boro
Burlington City
Edgewater Park
Beverly City
Riverside
Delanco
Riverton Boro
Palmyra Boro
Willingboro
Burlington
Florence
Mansfield
Chesterfield
North Hanover
Springfield
Wrightstown Boro
New Hanover
Delran
Westampton
Eastampton
Mt Holly
Cinnaminson
Moorestown
Hainesport
Pemberton Boro
Pemberton
Maple Shade
Mt Laurel
Lumberton
Southampton
Evesham
Medford
Medford Lakes Boro
Woodland
Tabernacle
Shamong
Washington
Bass River
Project Areas
North
South
West
East
0
2.5
5 Miles
April 2022
Burlington County Office
of Resource Conservation
Sources: Burlington County Office of Resource Conservation Project Areas, NRCS SSURGO Soils/Farmland Classes, Pinelands Commission Pinelands Boundary, NJ Office of Information Technology, Office of GIS Municipal Boundaries

An analysis of 2015 NJDEP & 2021 NRCS SSURGO data shows that more than 16,417 acres of prime farmland soils in the Farm Belt are now under urban development. Countywide, over 44,200 acres of prime soils have been converted to urban uses. This means that more than twenty-five percent of the Farm Belt's prime farmland soils have already been lost to urbanization. Countywide, more than forty percent of prime agricultural soils have been converted to urban use. As of 2015, 39,909 acres of prime soils remained in non-urban use in the Farm Belt and 61,291 acres remained in non-urban use countywide.

Table 11
Distribution of Prime Soils Across Land Uses in the Farm Belt and Burlington County

	Farm Belt Area (Acres)	Burlington County Area (Acres)	Farm Belt as % of County
Prime Agricultural Soils	56,326	105,563	53%
All Soils	152,991	525,003	29%
Prime as % of All Soils	37%	20%	

Source: NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover of NJ 2015 Data Layer & NRCS SSURGO Soils v.08/30/2021

Table 12
Prime Farmland Converted to Urban Uses in the Farm Belt and Burlington County

	Farm Belt Area (Acres)	Burlington County Area (Acres)	Farm Belt as % of County
Prime Agricultural Soils - All Land Uses	56,326	105,563	53%
Prime Agricultural Soils - Non-Urban Land Uses	39,909	61,291	65%
Prime Agricultural Soils - Converted to Urban Use	16,417	44,357	37%
Prime Agricultural Soils Lost (%)	29%	42%	

Source: NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover of NJ 2015 Data Layer & NRCS SSURGO Soils v.08/30/2021

Irrigated Acreage and Available Water Resources

Agricultural viability and production are tied into and dependent upon not only an adequate farmland base, but also the water cycle. Without water there would be no crops. Farmland acres absorb water and recharge underground aquifers and hold water to allow the movement of nutrients into crops and woodlands through evapotranspiration. Without farmland and open space, water is more likely to run off over the surface of the land with the potential to carry soil particles and nutrients with it down to surface water bodies and streams.

In 2017 215 farms irrigated 14,368 acres , representing roughly **10 percent** of the County's farms and just **13 percent** of its farmland (Table 13). However, every background report reviewed to develop this Plan indicates that many more farmers are considering or are currently changing to agricultural production regimes that require irrigated water. This is due, in part, to shifting market conditions that favor water intensive agriculture, such as nursery and sod crops. In the Pinelands, the water needs of cranberry farmers engaging in wet and dry harvest production cannot be understated along with the needs of the County's blueberry farmers. These indigenous Pinelands industries rely as much on the availability of water for production as they do on the availability of land.

Farming is totally dependent upon an adequate water supply for the crops being grown or livestock and other commodities being produced. Recent periods of drought have taught New Jersey farmers that irrigation is a necessary investment for production of fruits, vegetables, and grains. Table 13 shows the increase in irrigated farm acreage over the recent past.

Table 13

Number of Irrigated Farms in Burlington County (1987-2017)

	1987	1997	2012	2017
Number of Irrigated Farms	183	225	202	215
Irrigated Ag Land Total (Acres)	9194	11437	13123	14368
Irrigated, Harvested Cropland (Acres)	9025	11154	12956	12226
Irrigated, Pasture/Other Land (Acres)	169	283	875	769

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, various years.

Recognizing the industry's absolute need for water, the regulations do not limit the amount to be withdrawn. But annual registration is supposed to give the NJDEP the information it needs to determine whether total withdrawals exceed the sustainable yield of available ground and surface waters. According to Rutgers Cooperative Extension Agents (of Burlington County), 249 farm operators are currently registered. As of the date of the 2008 Plan there were 198 registered irrigation sources in the County. This represents a 25% increase since 2008.

Since 2017, 34 Burlington County farm operators with either permanently preserved farms or Term Easement Program agreements have been approved for $415,000+/- in state soil and water conservation grants. These grants are typically used for improvements to drainage projects and irrigation projects. The majority of these grants are used to design and install irrigation systems, according to staff of the State Soil Conservation Committee. Requiring a 50 percent match, these farmers will have invested an additional $415,000 +/-. Burlington County farm owners have been statewide leaders in the use and implementation of this program. During this same time period Burlington County farmers have accounted for one third of the soil and water conservation projects installed statewide.

Many of these installed practices incorporate the latest water conservation technology in drip irrigation or in water flow control devices. Other farmers have constructed irrigation ponds, withdrawal from which is also regulated by the Water Allocation Act and registration or certification.

It has been increasingly difficult for farmers to acquire the permits to drill new wells or make other withdrawals over 100,000 gallons per day. This is especially true over most of the study area that falls under Water Supply Critical Area II (see below). The inability to develop a new water supply through the Agricultural Diversion program will limit future farmers to crops dependent upon natural rainfall such as grains and field crops, including hay. Only the latter crop could, if marketed directly, increase profitability. The other commodities that could grow with only natural rainfall are priced by market systems out of the control of the farm operator.

Burlington County Water Allocation Credit Exchange

In 1993, the NJDEP established Water Supply Critical Area II (CWA2) including most of Burlington, Camden and Gloucester Counties. According to the Department, there has been overuse of the Potomac-Raritan–Magothy aquifer, the main source of potable water for the area. Ground water levels were reduced, causing intrusion of salt water and increased risk of contamination of the aquifer. Users of this water, other than agricultural users, were required to reduce withdrawals to 1991 levels.

State legislation established a Water Allocation Credit Transfer Program that would allow additional withdrawals from the aquifer from within a designated area in Burlington County. In 1988, the Freeholder Board established itself as the Burlington County Water Exchange allowing it to manage a water allocation program.

In 2004, the County adopted a Water Allocation Credit Exchange that would enable new withdrawals of **groundwater** in accordance with a plan designating where this water could be used. Categories of water allocation were defined. Category A was to supply the immediate need of water suppliers who have exceeded their base allocation and suppliers of any interconnected systems. These would take precedence over allocation of credits for any other category. Category B contains 50 percent of the water allocation credits remaining after satisfying Category A. These would be reserved for activities "which enhance Burlington County's FPP and employ currently acceptable water conservation measures." **Farmers are entitled to 50 percent of the total water available after the immediate needs of Category A are satisfied.**

The NJDEP Bureau of Water Allocation regulates the diversion of Water in New Jersey. An **Agricultural Water Usage Certification** or **Agricultural Water Use Registration** must be obtained from the County agricultural agent if an agricultural operator seeks to withdraw ground and/or surface water in excess of 100,000 gallons per day, or has a combined pump capacity of 70 gallons per minute or greater is regulated by the Bureau of Water Allocation for agricultural, aquacultural or horticultural purposes.

The Bureau of Water Allocation regulates water diversion through permitting, certification, and registration programs. According to their website, agricultural facilities diverting more than 100,000 gallons per day are regulated with Agricultural Water Use Certifications. Agricultural facilities diverting less than 100,000 gallons per day but with a capability to divert over 100,000 gallons per day (70 gpm) are regulated by Agricultural Water Use Registrations. Non-agricultural facilities diverting less than 100,000 gallons per day but with a capability to divert over 100,000 gallons per day (70 gpm) are regulated by Water Use Registrations.

Farmland Assessment and Census of Agriculture Statistics and Trends

Farmland Assessment Statistics

In New Jersey the Farmland Assessment Act of 1963 helps reduce the real estate tax burden for land "actively devoted to agriculture." Table 14 represents the most recent and historical farmland assessment data for Burlington County related to the use of the assessed farmland.

Table 14
Burlington County – Historical Farmland Assessment Data
Land Use

	2020[3]	2015	2010	2004	2000	1995	1990	1983
Cropland Harvested (acres)	51,202	58,372	55,209	60,324	66,381	73,200	73,723	83,719
Cropland Pastured (acres)	1,928	2,165	2,970	4,717	4,352	5,390	5,134	5,457
Permanent Pasture (acres)	6,200	6,578	7,130	7,921	8,246	8,801	10,173	11,297
Active Ag Subtotal (acres)	**59,330**	**67,115**	**65,309**	**72,962**	**78,979**	**87,391**	**89,030**	**100,473**
Unattached Woodland (acres)	24,473	25,942	28,393	27,384	27,583	23,838	12,031	n/a
Attached Woodland (acres)	26,095[1]	28,222[1]	27,920[1]	37,149	41,027	48,778	47,859	49,476[1]
Equine Acres	757[2]	887[2]	2,416[2]	826	775	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total for Ag Use (acres)	**110,710**	**122,192**	**124,038**	**138,321**	**148,364**	**160,008**	**148,919**	**154,119**
Total County Land Area	524,352	524,352	524,352	514,927	514,927	514,927	514,927	514,927
Percentage Farmland Assessed	**21.11%**	**23.30%**	**23.65%**	**26.9%**	**28.8%**	**31.1%**	**28.9%**	**29.9%**

Source: NJ Division of Taxation, Various Annual Farmland Assessment Reports
[1] Woodland / Wetland
[2] Total Equine Boarding Rehab & Training Acreage
[3] Data incomplete, missing some Mansfield forms

In 2020, the municipalities in Burlington County with the most "active agriculture" in terms of farmland assessment were:

1. Southampton (9,874 acres)
2. Springfield (9,498 acres)
3. Chesterfield (6,966 acres)
4. Pemberton (5,551 acres)
5. North Hanover (4,941 acres)

Census of Agriculture Statistics

According to the most recent Census of Agriculture (2017), Burlington County has 915 farms remaining today, operating on 96,256 acres of farmland [Table 15]. Farmland now accounts for approximately one-fifth of the county's land base. In the past 100 years, the county has lost two-thirds of its farms and 70 percent of its farmland. Since 1950, Burlington County has lost over half of its farms and farmland.

In 2017, the average farm size in the county was 105 acres, not substantially smaller than the average farm back in 1900 [Table 15]. One-third of all farms in the County were less than 10 acres in size. More than two-thirds of farms in the County operated on 50 acres or less. Overall, very small farms (less than 10 acres) only operate about one (1) percent of the agricultural land base in Burlington County.

The emergence of the green industry, for example, has resulted in a large number of small farms that are under 50 acres, and often under 10 acres, in size. Many successful nursery and greenhouse operations are operated on relatively little land due to the high value of the products grown and sold. The proliferation of small farms is also partially attributable to a growing interest in so-called "hobby farming," large residential landowners that engage in small-scale agricultural production.

Interviews with prominent farmers, as well as agents from Rutgers Cooperative Extension and personnel from farm support agencies, substantiate a divergence in the structure of Burlington County's farm industry. While the number of small farms is increasing, some farms are getting larger; but for different reasons. Particularly in sectors such as grains, the ability to farm large tracts of land is necessary to achieve the economies of scale needed to earn a sufficient living in farming.

Understanding the size structure of agricultural operations in the county has important implications for farmland preservation efforts. For example, decisions regarding the future disposition of more than half of Burlington farmland rest in the hands of a very few farmers. Approximately 56% of Burlington County's land in farms, 54,386 acres, is operated by only 37 large farms (500 acres or more in size) [Table 15].

Table 15

Size Distribution of Burlington County Farms - 2017

Acres	Farms (#)	Farms (% of Total #)	Land in Farms (acres)	Land in Farms (% of Total acres)
1 to 9	303	33.1%	1,933	2%
10 to 49	359	39.2%	8,133	8.4%
50 to 69	60	6.6%	3,517	3.7%
70 to 99	39	4.3%	3,185	3.3%
100 to 139	38	4.2%	4,269	4.4%
140 to 179	17	1.9%	2,681	2.8%
180 to 219	14	1.5%	2,766	2.9%
220 to 259	12	1.3%	2,864	3%
260 to 499	36	3.9%	12,522	13%
500 to 999	19	2.1%	12,584	13.1%
1,000 to 1,999	13	1.4%	18,377	19.1%
2,000+	5	0.5%	23,425	24.3%
All Farms	**915**	**100%**	**96,256**	**100%**

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2017.

The 2017 Census of Agriculture shows a decline in the number of farms since 1997, Burlington County had 935 farms in 1997.

While one may look with despair at the loss of agricultural activity experienced in the county in the past several decades, the fact is that Burlington County still maintains a vibrant farming industry today. According to the 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture, Burlington County's 915 farms sold agricultural products worth more than $98.5 million. which is a significant increase over the $83.3 million in sales reported in the 2002 Census.

Burlington County farmers operate more than 96,000 acres of farmland. However, what is often not well understood is the ownership of such lands. According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, about 55 percent of farmland operated in the county is owned by the farmers farming the land.

The availability and affordability of quality rental property is critical for Burlington County farmers. Rental land enables expansion of existing businesses (i.e., land-intensive grain operations) as well as provides beginning farmers access to property without making large capital investments in land. These patterns of farmland ownership are not dissimilar from those seen elsewhere.

Chapter V
Agricultural Industry – Trends and Overview

This section of the Plan is intended to provide a thorough overview of the County's existing agricultural industry, including historical crop trends and the market value of agricultural products over the last 30 years. In addition, this section discusses the status of private sector agricultural related industries and public sector agricultural support agencies.

Similar to other sections of this Plan, this section relies heavily on the report entitled *"Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends (2004)."* This report is incorporated by reference and information on the following can be found in Burlington County's Agricultural Industry, see Part 3 (Agriculture as an Industry) and Part 4 (Farm Belt Agriculture – A Way of Life).

Production agriculture is an historically important industry in Burlington County. Like most of New Jersey, Burlington County rose from agrarian roots. As noted in the *Review of Farm Industry Economics*, production agriculture maintains important linkages to a wide range of support industries, ranging from large animal veterinarians and feed suppliers to equipment and packaging manufacturers. For example, in 1997, these linkages to other industries created an additional $47.6 million in economic activity, bringing the total economic impact of production agriculture in Burlington County to $135.2 million. These linkages continue to this day and serve as an important contributor to the local and regional economy.

While farms continue to contribute significantly to the economy of the county, they are also increasingly being recognized for the important contributions to the **quality of life** enjoyed by Burlington County residents. County visioning exercises have demonstrated the visual preferences for agrarian scenes held by municipal leaders and citizens in Burlington County. Farms across the state are often the stewards of dwindling open space resources and associated aesthetic, ecological, recreational, and historic amenities.

Agriculture also remains an important part of the **culture** of Burlington County. Farmers, despite the fact they account for an ever-decreasing fraction of the region's population, are still active local leaders in many municipalities in which agriculture remains a significant industry, serving on town governing bodies, planning and zoning boards, and other local committees. And in many instances, the farming industry has shaped the local fabric of communities throughout Burlington County. It is not uncommon to see third, fourth, or even older generations of farm families operating on the same land as their forefathers. The question remains at to whether children and grandchildren of today's farm families will be willing and able to maintain the farming tradition in northern Burlington County.

Included in *Review of Farm Industry Economics* is the following list of strengths and challenges in the Burlington County Farm Sector.

Figure E

Strengths and Challenges in the Burlington County Farm Sector

Strengths

1. Very large agricultural base
   - 857 farms (3rd in state)
   - 103,667 acres of farmland (2nd in state)
   - Farms tend to be large as compared to other parts of state (average farm size is 121 acres)
   - Large farm product sales volume ($87.5 million is 2nd in state)
   - Overall economic impact in county of $135 million
2. Many very large farms
   - 48% of farms have sales of more than $10,000 (1st in state)
   - 19 farms are over 1000 acres (1st in state)
3. Higher level of farm profitability (as compared to other counties)
   - Net cash return from farming is more than $23 million (2nd in state)
   - More than half of farms generate net gains (4th in state)
   - Average profit per farm is 30% higher than state average
4. High concentration of state's fruit production
5. High concentration of nursery production
6. High capital investment in farm machinery and equipment (3rd in state)
7. Average age of farmer is lower than statewide average
8. Diversity of farm operations (in terms of size and production)

Challenges

1. Property taxes are 5 times the national average (and rising)
2. Many small farms (may require different policy support)
3. Average net farm income per farm (for all farms in the county) is only $27,651
   - Median household income in Burlington County was $58,608 in 1999
4. Majority of farm machinery and equipment predates 1993
5. High demand for hired farm labor
   - Availability of farm labor is tightening across the state
   - Costs of labor (i.e., insurances)
   - Increased need for farm labor housing
6. Rising input costs
7. Intergenerational transfer of farms
   - The average Burlington County farmer is 54.5 years old (and rising)
   - Creating an environment conducive to new farmer entry
   - Encouraging transfer of farm businesses to younger family members

Trends in Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold

Today, Burlington County agriculture is quite diverse, producing a large number of crops and livestock products. Total farm products sales in 2017 totaled $98 million, up roughly eighteen (18) percent from the 2002 sales volume of $83.3 million. Leading commodity areas in Burlington County (by sales volume) in 2017 are shown in Table 16. Sales information suggests several notable changes over the period between 2002 and 2017. Since 2002 there was a rise in percent sales of grains/oilseeds/dry beans/dry peas, fruits/nuts/berries, and nursery/greenhouse/floriculture/sod while there was a decline in vegetables/melons/potatoes/sweet potatoes sales and a large decline in dairy sales as the dairy industry has now vanished from Burlington County.

Table 16
Leading Agricultural Commodities in Burlington County (2017)

Commodity	2017 Sales ($ million)	Pct. Of Sales (2017)
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture & sod crops	$47	48%
Fruits, nuts & berries	$22.90	23%
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans & dry peas	$10	10%
Vegetables, melons, potatoes & sweet potatoes	$9.40	10%
Horses, ponies, mules, burros & donkeys	$4.70	5%
Other crops and hay	$1.50	2%
Poultry & eggs	$0.80	1%
Cattle & calves	$0.70	1%
Hogs & pigs	$0.30	<1%
Cultivated christmas trees & short rotation woody crops	$0.20	<1%
Total	**$98**	**100%**

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

There are two major agricultural products produced in Burlington County whose operations are based in the Pinelands. These products, cranberries and blueberries, are critical components of Burlington County's agricultural industry. According to the NJPC Long-Term Economic Monitoring Program (2017 Annual Report), "In 2016, the used portion of the cranberry crop increased by 14% since 2015 (about 5% over utilized production in 2014.) Cranberry prices per pound also rose by 14% from prices in 2015. Total utilized production of cranberries in New Jersey climbed to 646,000 barrels at a total value of $27,835,000. The area harvested for cranberries is staying steady at about 3,000 acres, so increase in used harvest may partially reflect increased yield. Yield per acre gained almost 10% over 2015 production. New Jersey production ranked third among the states in total cranberry production. For blueberries, the used portion of the harvest has decreased by about 18% since 2015 and by almost 21% since 2014. The decrease in production was coupled with a 2% decrease in prices from 2014 to 2015 and another 3% decrease in prices for 2016. Blueberry prices went from $1.40 per pound in 2014 to $1.37 per pound in 2015 and ended at $1.35 per pound in 2016. Overall value of the crop used in 2016 dropped to $59,390,000. For 2016, the 9,300 acres harvested for blueberries was equal to the acreage harvested in 2014, but was down compared to 2015 when 10,000 acres were harvested. New Jersey blueberries yielded a total of 44,120 pounds, which ranked seventh in blueberry production among the states."[14]

Direct Marketing Agriculture Products

The direct marketing of farm products to consumers continues to be an important strategy for promoting farm viability in many states, particularly those where farmers have ready access to urban and suburban consumer bases. New Jersey, and more notably Burlington County, is ahead of the curve in this respect. By selling products directly to consumers, farmers are able to capture a greater percentage of the consumer food dollar.

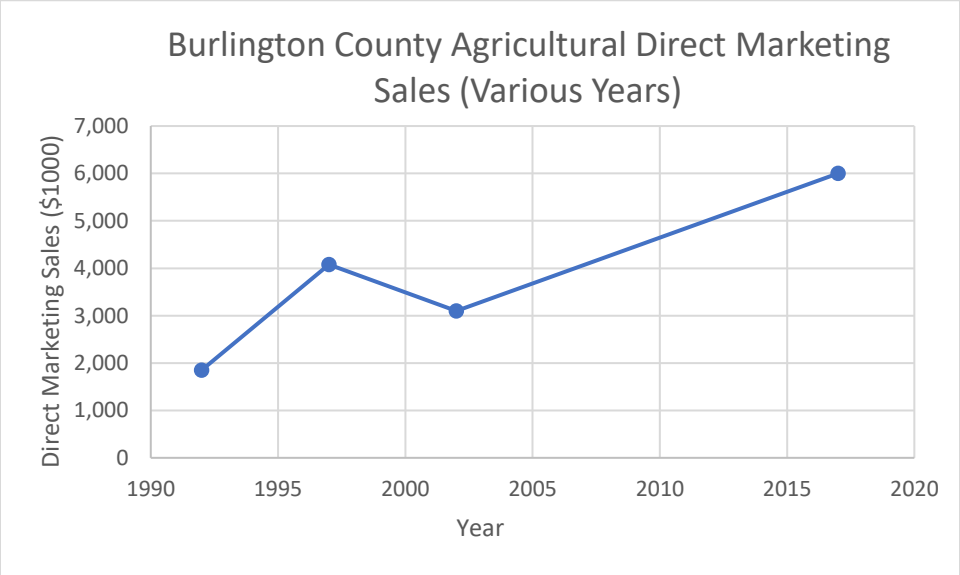
According to 2017 Census of Agriculture data, Burlington County ranked 5th in the State in both total agricultural product sales and direct marketing sales (value added product

[14] NJ Pinelands Commission Long Range Economic Monitoring Report (2017)

sales included). With sales close to $6 million (annual), Burlington County ranked 83rd among all U.S. counties in direct marketing sales of agricultural products for human consumption (value added product sales included). Fourteen of the top twenty leading counties, including top ranked Napa county, were in California. Lancaster county in neighboring Pennsylvania and Worcester and Middlesex counties in Massachusetts were also among the leaders in farm direct marketing. As Figure F shows, growth in Burlington County's direct marketing sales since 1992 has been substantial. This mirrors the larger trend of direct marketing farm sales increasing steadily nation-wide

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, a few more Burlington County farms reported direct marketing sales in 2017 vis-à-vis 2002 (159 versus 151). Direct marketing sales, however, were substantially higher. In 2002, direct-to-consumer sales of farm products in the County were around $3.1 million while sales approached $6 million in 2017.

Figure F



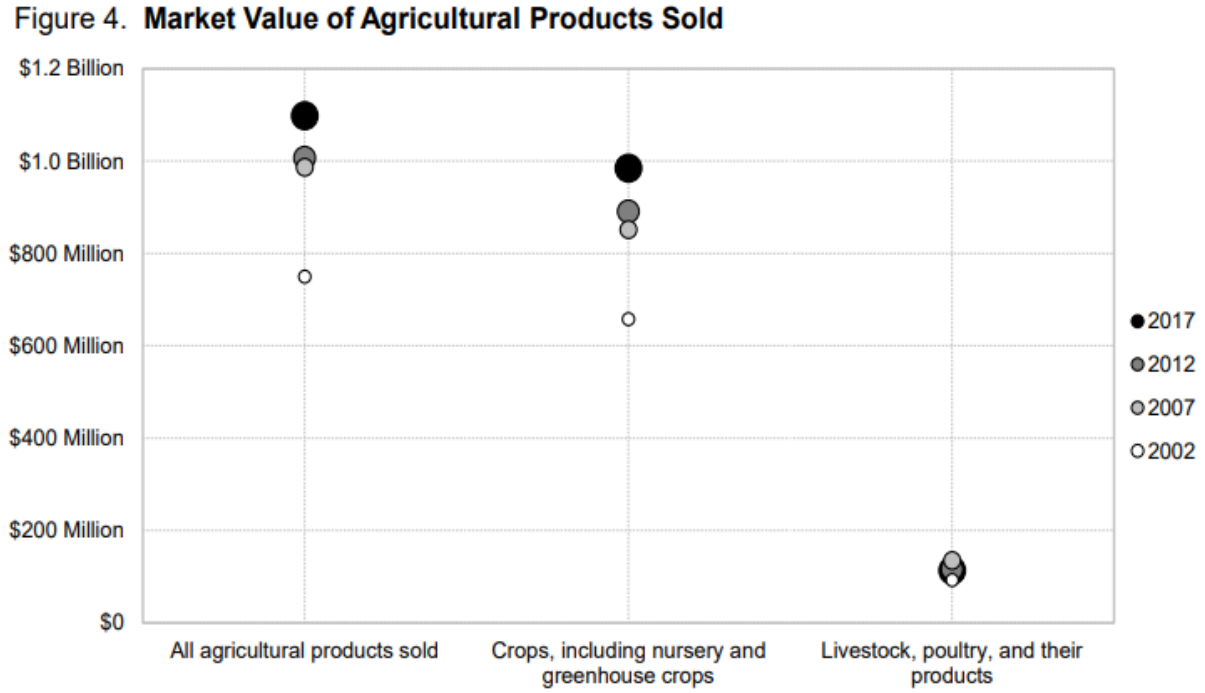
Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, various years

According to the NJDA's Jersey Fresh Program, there are 71 farms in Burlington County with active roadside markets and/or "Pick Your Own" components to their farms. Only 2 farms are certified organic farms. Information on each one of these farms can be found on the Jersey Fresh website: https://findjerseyfresh.com/explore/#findfresh.

Crop & Production Trends

The composition of agriculture all across New Jersey has changed significantly over time. As recently as 1969, agricultural sales in New Jersey were split evenly between crops and livestock. Today, crops account for 90 percent of the state's total farm cash receipts, with livestock and related farm products accounting for the remaining 10 percent of agricultural product sales (Figure G).

Figure G



Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture (2017)

The pattern in Burlington County is largely the same. Burlington County's, like New Jersey's, farm economy has shifted markedly away from livestock to crops in the last several decades. Once a dominant livestock county, today crop production accounts for 90 percent of overall farm product sales, with livestock and related products contributing only 10 percent of agricultural sales volume. Historical records, however, demonstrate the importance of livestock agriculture in the county through the middle of the 1900s.

For example, in the 1800s, Burlington County was well regarded for the number and quality of its workhorses. With the advance of the Industrial Revolution, however, the need for horses for farm work declined, as did the workhorse production industry. By the mid-1900s, horse production increased again, although not for on-farm work purposes. This time, breeding horses for show and racing (coupled with the passage of farmland assessment provisions) provided opportunity for equine producers.

Swine production was also a historically important industry; in 1832 a Mansfield Township farmer was credited with fattening the largest hog of the day (1,611 pounds). Cattle production and dairying were also major agricultural industries in the county. But with the advent of refrigerated boxcars and transportation advancements, many livestock producers in the region were quickly displaced by competition from the Corn Belt where corn-fed animals could be raised more inexpensively. While macroeconomic conditions (i.e., World War II) at times supported Burlington livestock producers, the trend in these industries was downward. Thus began a transition to vegetables, poultry and other products that could be more competitively introduced into local markets.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, Burlington County chicken and egg production expanded dramatically as demand in eastern markets increased. In the 1920s, Burlington was the largest capon-producing region in the U.S., due in large part to the

success of breeding the Jersey Black Giant – the largest chicken breed of the day. As was true for many livestock producers, over time competition from outside the region tolled heavily on grain producers as well. Lower cost producers from the Midwest eventually began lowering market prices to levels that New Jersey grain producers could not profitably meet.

As highlighted in following pages, nearly two-thirds of Burlington County farm cash receipts today are generated from fruit and nursery production. Historically important livestock activities such as cattle, swine, and poultry production have largely declined and there are no longer any dairy farms operating in the County. Equine production has remained significant since the mid-1900s (although now only accounting for about 5 percent of total farm sales [2017 Census of Agriculture]). Vegetables and grains are also important contributors to the county's agricultural economy (accounting for about 20 percent of total farm sales [2017 Census of Agriculture]).

Based on 2017 Census of Agriculture data, statewide there were only 416 farms selling more than $500,000 in farm products, of which 40 are in Burlington County. Additionally, the 2017 Census also shows that Burlington County is among the state's leading counties across many commodity areas, including:

- 2nd in Fruits, tree nuts, berries
- 2nd in Hogs and pigs
- 3rd in Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys
- 4th in Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas
- 4th in Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod
- 4th in Cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops
- 4th in Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk
- 5th in Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes

Profiles of Major Agricultural Commodities

The characteristics of farm operations vary considerably in Burlington County, in terms of not only size but also commodities produced. The statewide characteristics of each of the following major commodity sectors are examined in detail in the **Part 3.5** of the ***Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report***:

- Nursery, Greenhouse and Sod
- Fruit and Berry Production (including blueberries & cranberries)
- Grain Production
- Vegetable Production
- Dairy Production
- Equine Production

In the **appendix of that report** is a comparative data for the 11 major farm classifications in Burlington County.

Availability of Farm Supplies and Services

Part 3.8.8 of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report* provides detail on the availability of farm supplies services within the market region of Burlington County.

More in-depth research would be required to determine what suppliers and services Farm Belt farmers presently lack. A useful complement to such an analysis would be an examination of the factors that have driven out such businesses (aside from purely market based decisions related to client bases) and the impediments to establishing or recruiting businesses.

The results of the University of Nebraska study conducted in Burlington County did not show that surveyed farmland owners or the interviewed local experts indicated significant problems with the supply of farm chemicals, seeds, implements or other manufactured inputs. Costs and access to supplies and services has changed for the Burlington County farmer but it appears that change is not different that the challenges faced by other local businesses or consumers in this new global and technologically based economy.

Other Agricultural Related Industries

Farmers in Burlington County are interested in additional direct to market opportunities. Survey research conducted by the University of Nebraska supports this. Burlington County was chosen to participate in a study of fifteen urbanizing counties in the United States in 2007. One of the major findings was that relatively few Burlington County farmers were satisfied with marketing outlets for the products raised on their land. Though direct marketing to local residents through road side stands or participating in a Community Farmers Market may aid farmers in increasing their market share, it is not the only way.

Farmers can and should seek out other outlets for the product. These outlets could be landscapers, restaurants, supermarkets and institutions such as schools and governments. Government can play a role in increasing outlets and minimizing barriers for entrance into the market place for farmers.

Part 3.3 of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report* (December 2004) provides more in depth detail on the trends in industry concentration, agricultural production mix, and direct marketing of farm products.

Chapter VI
Agricultural Economic Development, Industry Sustainability, Retention and Promotion

This section of the Plan expands on the County's vision for farming and the agricultural industry beyond preservation of the agricultural land base. This includes existing agricultural industry support (RTF /Agricultural Mediation Programs and Farmland Assessment) and other potential support mechanisms.

As is the case with some of the earlier sections, this chapter remains largely consistent with the 2008 Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan. Although there have not been any studies directly related to agriculture within Burlington County conducted since 2008, many of the observations and recommendations in this section remain as relevant in 2022 as they were in 2008.

Economic Development

Even with farmland preservation, farm businesses in Burlington County, like those elsewhere, are finding it increasingly difficult to remain economically viable. Farm profits are subject to the unpredictability of commodity price markets, weather, pests and other factors beyond the control of farmers. While the farm community is innovative, with a long history of adapting to such challenges, increasing pressures from encroaching residential and commercial development is creating new challenges.

New non-agricultural development in agricultural areas creates both opportunities and conflicts for agriculture. Such development consumes productive farmland and increases pressures on remaining farmers to "sell out." It often fragments the resource base and reduces the efficiencies with which farm properties can be operated. The industrial nature of agricultural operations, which includes early morning noise, odors, chemical application, and slow moving farm equipment on roads, leads to tensions, if not outright conflict, between farmers and non-farmers. From the farmers' perspective, an influx of new suburban neighbors may not only create pressure to alter normal farm practices, but it also may result in theft, vandalism, and trespass issues.

The encouraging news is that farm decline and conflict are not the inevitable outcomes of suburban development. They are commonly the outcomes because proactive measures to increase the compatibility of farm and non-farm uses are not taken. **New market opportunities can be realized, appropriate policies can be put into place, and actions can be taken to bridge the gap between the farm and non-farm communities.**

Whether agriculture remains economically viable in Burlington County will be determined in large part by the actions - or inaction - of local leaders to engage in planning and policy making that recognizes the needs of agriculture.

Complicating matters is that, unlike farmland preservation techniques, indicators of economic development success will be more difficult to track. The public sector must be able to track and represent progress of these new programs if it expects to achieve public support of these new efforts. A stable source of funding for new agriculture economic development programs will need to be explored further. Grant opportunities from relevant public and private grant funding programs will likely be the initial source of funding for these programs.

Survey of Owners / Operators of Farmland in Burlington County

In addition to the Farm Belt Studies, the Freeholder Board agreed to take part in a study funded by a National Research Initiative Grant from the Cooperative State Research, Education, & Extension Service of the USDA. This study was conducted by Mr. Dick Essex of the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska and Mr. Brian Schilling of the Food Policy Institute of Rutgers University. Burlington County was one of fifteen counties nationwide selected due to its efforts to preserve land in an urbanizing area. The researchers were specifically interested in "how Burlington County's agricultural sector has responded to urbanization."[15]

In the winter of 2006, the researchers mailed surveys to 140 owners of agricultural land in Burlington County. In addition to this survey, in 2005 and 2006 the researchers interviewed, by phone or in-person, a total of 30 members of the agribusiness community.

Ninety-six of the respondents to the survey were farm operators rather than non-operator owners. As previously mentioned, relatively few of the respondents were satisfied with the marketing outlets for the products raised on their land.

Both the survey and the interviews showed the labor supply, adequacy of water supplies for irrigation, and the supply of future farmers to be serious concerns.

The study yielded some interesting negative and positive results. The study indicated that only 17 percent of the respondents had developed succession plans for the transfer of ownership and management of their farmland to a relative or other person. In addition, over a quarter of the sample reported some change for the worse in farming of their land "because non-farmers lived by."

On a positive note, the survey results indicated that farm operators have not been crippled by the "impermanence syndrome"[16], citing that 39 percent believed that agriculture in Burlington County had a "bright" or at least "modest future." Not surprisingly, regression analysis showed that operators were **more likely to be optimistic about the future of farming if they found that the markets for their farm products were competitive.** They were less likely to be optimistic if they were having difficulties with non-farm neighbors.

The results of this study are not taken by Burlington County to be matters of fact. They are taken as reinforcement to support many of the findings and recommendations of the County's Farm Belt Reports.

Anticipated Agricultural Trends

As farmers face increasing pressures to stay profitable, the ability to adapt and capitalize upon new market opportunities is critical. For Burlington County farmers, direct-to consumer marketing has emerged as an important strategy to remain profitable and successfully co-exist with a growing population of non-farm neighbors. Among the emerging opportunities that County farmers are considering are:

[15] Essex, pg 6

[16] Defined by the study as a condition where operators are so pessimistic about their future they ceased to invest in their land's agricultural capabilities.

- Value added products
- Changing consumer preferences (i.e., organic production and community supported agriculture)
- Ethnic markets for farm products
- Aquaculture / vertical farming
- Agritourism

These trends can maintain the viability of Burlington County agriculture by increasing the opportunities to capture more of the profits from the products they grow. Capturing more of the profits from the food system is one of the fundamental ways farmers can remain viable. According to an article in the New Planner (Spring, 2008) entitled "The Planner's Role in the Urban Food System" a food systems is comprised of the following components:

- Production (the growing and raising of food)
- Distribution (the moving of food)
- Acquisition (the getting of food)
- Consumption (the eating of food)
- Waste (the disposal of food and food products)

The County's FPP should explore opportunities to provide farmers with access to information related to the above trends so they are able to ascertain whether or not changes to their operations to capitalize on these trends are realistic for them. The consumer trend of **"buying local"** and **"buying green"** is important for the farmers in Burlington County to appreciate and understand. The County's FPP is likely in a position to increase the number of community farmers markets by sponsoring or assisting local communities to organize their own.

The trend towards direct marketing should not be viewed as a panacea for the agricultural community. Direct marketing is predicated on the ability or farmers to produce high-quality agricultural products as well as their ability to sell and market them in the face of increased competition. Accesses to off-farm markets are on the upswing including the County's community farmers market in Moorestown and many others in the region. Several local farmers participate in inner city farmers markets in Philadelphia and New York City. Local farmers still are very active in the wholesale business including sales at the Philadelphia Terminal, sales to other farmers seeking niche products, and a burgeoning market to supermarket chains and local privately owned restaurants.

The County hopes to implement strategies captured within goals 5 (Implementation of Agricultural Economic Development Strategies) and 6 (Coordination of Public Sector Agricultural Services) of Chapter IX of this Plan to assist in preserving the viability of the agricultural industry in Burlington county.

Part 3.9 of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report explores these trends further*.

The NJDA provides a list of resolutions adopted at each annual NJ Agricultural Convention. These resolutions often highlight strategies necessary to strengthen the various agricultural industries in New Jersey. The most recent set of resolutions can be found at:

https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/conventions/2022/resolutions2022.html

The strategies proposed are commodity specific including the following key agricultural commodities among others;

- Produce Industry
- Ornamental / Horticulture Industry
- Seafood Industry
- Dairy Industry
- Field and Forage Crop Industry
- Equine Industry
- Wine Industry

As Burlington County gets more involved with agricultural industry retention, expansion and promotion it will be essential for the CADB and staff to understand the opportunities and existing programs available through the NJDA and other relevant agencies. Opportunities for partnerships and grant funding should be explored. Though the County's FPP is not in a position to advocate for one commodity group over another, it should understand what opportunities are available for producers and put them in contact with resources that can be of assistance.

Public Sector Institutional Support – Burlington County

Part 6 of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report* (December 2004) includes an in-depth discussion on viability of the agricultural industry.

In addition to the extensive research, the report includes a **list of 21 guiding principles** offered to provide a foundation from which to develop and implement a plan of action for sustaining a profitable agricultural industry. These principles, though originally contained within the regional plan for the Northern Burlington County region, are related to all agricultural interests within Burlington County and remain as relevant today as they did in 2008.

1. Agriculture is an industry, a way of life, and a land use of special historic, current, and future importance in the Farm Belt. It is an integral part of the region's heritage and identity.

2. The time for action is now. The profitability of farming is becoming increasingly challenged and farmland resources are dwindling. Planning for the future is critical, but action today is necessary.

3. Actions taken today – as well as actions not taken - will determine to a large extent the future viability of the agriculture industry in the County.

4. Farming is first and foremost a business.

5. Farmland is not simply open space; it is part of a working landscape and the primary resource of an important land-based industry.

6. The retention of agriculture has long stood as a well-supported goal for Burlington County residents. In addition to direct and indirect economic contributions, agriculture provides myriad ecological, environmental, cultural, and recreational benefits.

7. Farming is not a dead or dying industry. With the proper support and elimination of barriers, agriculture can remain a vibrant industry in the region today and in the future.

8. Farming is a dynamic and ever-changing industry. The agricultural sector of 50 years ago is different from the industry of today. What will the industry of tomorrow look like? What will its needs be? Care should be exercised not to limit the adaptability and innovation of the farm community.

9. While critically important, preserving farmland is not enough. Stabilizing a declining farmland base is certainly a necessary condition for future agricultural viability, but it is not a sufficient condition. Economic and policy development for the farming industry, as well as sound and equitable land use planning, is also needed.

10. A comprehensive Burlington County agricultural industry development program will require coordinated efforts to preserve farmland, promote economic development, and encourage innovative planning.

11. There cannot be a "one size fits all" approach to farm policy in the County. The County must recognize that agricultural operations in the region are diverse, ranging from large dairy and grain farms to small nursery operations.

12. Viable agriculture depends upon reliable and stable access to all necessary resources and factors of production, including land, water, and agricultural labor, as well as the ability to develop farming infrastructure such as farm buildings and labor housing.

13. Burlington County farms offer residents the opportunity to purchase fresh farm products that are grown and sold locally and share in the agricultural experience. Increasingly suburban and urban residents are capitalizing on the recreational and educational tourism opportunities offered by farms; ranging from autumn harvest festivals and corn mazes, to pick your own operations. Such interaction between farmers and non-farmers not only contributes to farm incomes and local economies, but also fosters positive experiences and understanding between communities sometimes at odds.

14. Burlington County is blessed with an abundance of prime agricultural soils – an irreplaceable and valuable resource that underlies the success and productivity of farming in the region. Preserving this resource is essential for ensuring the maximum range of agricultural production opportunities for the future.

15. Farmers are stewards of a vast land resource (nearly half of the land area in the Farm Belt). Farming, like any other industry, has unwanted by-products from production. Strategically pursuing federal and state technical and financial assistance can further enhance farm stewardship and, in so doing, protect soil and water resources in the County.

16. The motivations for farming may differ substantially across farms. For some, 100 percent of household income may be derived from farming. For others, off-farm income may be required to keep the farm household economically viable. And for yet others, farming may simply be a lifestyle choice or hobby pursuit.

17. Municipal governments have extensive experience (and the authority) to plan for development, and they may plan for agriculture. Farmland is neither an

undeveloped land use nor a residual land use (i.e., the absence of development). Agriculture has its own special needs as a land use and as an industry.

18. Consistent with the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan's Statewide Policy on Equity, efforts to retain farmland (and farming) in the Farm Belt and promote smart growth need to be undertaken in a manner in which farmers nor any other group disproportionately benefit or bear the burdens or implementation.

19. New residents in rural areas are often viewed as "part of the problem" facing farmers. But they can also be part of the solution to farm decline in urbanizing areas.

20. Farming in Burlington County provides for aquifer recharge and stormwater management when long-established drainage systems are maintained and updated.

21. Farming sets the landscape character of the Route 206 corridor valued by all County residents

Chapter III of this Plan provided an overview of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report's* **twelve point-strategy** for keeping agriculture economically viable with many of the points and strategies related to economic development. Many of those strategies and points are reflected in Chapter IX of this Plan (Goals, Strategies and Indicators: (2023-2032).

Public Sector Institutional Support – NJDA

Farmer Support

As a program of the New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee, the NJ Land Link Program is a resource and referral center for new farmers, farmers seeking access to land and farming opportunities, landowners seeking farmers and farmers working on estate and farm transfer plans. It also works to connect farmland owners with farmers seeking access to land and farming opportunities.

https://www.njlandlink.org/

Marketing / Public Relation Support

Direct Marketing and agritourism promotes the use of agricultural amenities and resources, such as open fields farm houses, livestock and other scenic components of the farm for the purpose of offering fee-based recreational opportunities. Agritourism can benefit local communities by attracting tourists to the area who not only spend time at participating farms, but spend money in other local businesses.

Farmers benefit by supplementing their income from those added activities. Agritourism may be a valuable means of supplementing farm income and may increase the sale of products produced on-site. People residing in suburban and city environments are attracted to rural areas with active farm operations. Given Burlington County's close proximity to Philadelphia, Atlantic City, and New York metropolitan areas, farmers have a large urban population to market an agritourism program uniquely tailored to their farm operations.

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Division of Marketing and Development, is host of the **Jersey Fresh campaign** and is also responsible for other initiatives that promote and support New Jersey agriculture. The division offers advertising materials to farmers to use for direct marketing. The division is a resource that can be used to identify opportunities that are helpful to agricultural businesses. For instance, the division has identified an opportunity for New Jersey farmers to sell over-produced or under-valued product to the New Jersey Department of Corrections. This opportunity would be beneficial to farmers when market conditions are very poor and regaining only production costs is an appealing alternative to suffering a financial loss.

https://findjerseyfresh.com/

Community Farmers Markets

Since the adoption of the 2008 plan attempts have been made to establish community farmers markets at various locations within the County. Markets within Bordentown City, Mount Holly, Burlington City, Marlton, Medford, Mount Laurel and elsewhere have been established with varying success. At the time of the adoption of the original plan there was only one community farmers market in Burlington County. This is located at the BCCAC in Moorestown. These outlets all offer fresh, locally grown farm products throughout the summer and fall months.

Public Sector Institutional Support – Agricultural Education and Market Research Coordination

In large part, the role of economic development from the production side is the responsibility of the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service, Rutgers University – Cook College, and the NJ Agricultural Extension Station.

Information on obtaining the interest in farming along with the necessary skills and knowledge to farm is in **Part 4.4** of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report.*

Private Sector Business Support

The significance of the loss of nearby farm equipment dealers and suppliers of seed, chemicals and machine parts as a cost factor that weakens farm viability is a question that needs more detailed research – in the Farm Belt and the County as a whole. On the one hand, farmers often cite the inconvenience of having to travel to obtain equipment and supplies, or to sell their products, as one of the changes in agriculture to which they must adapt. The older farmers remember when there were dealers and suppliers in the county; younger farmers do not know a situation any different than the present one. Undoubtedly, valuable time and other resources such as labor and income are wasted if one has to suspend farm operations to wait even 24 hours for a necessary part.

Information on input suppliers, product distributors and lending agencies is contained in **Part 3.8.8** of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report.* The availability of farm supplies and services is identified as a key issue affecting farming in Burlington County.

A 2022 review of the New Jersey Farmer newspaper for contained advertisements identified listings for the following kinds of suppliers and equipment:

- Dave's Equipment Sales – Ringoes, NJ
- Allonardo Enterprises – Vineland, NJ
- Belle Meade Garage – Belle Meade, NJ
- Greenest Fertilizer, LLC – Elmer, NJ
- Deerbusters.com
- John Glover Farm Insurance – Woodstown, NJ
- Plant Food Company - Cranbury, NJ
- AgroLab – Harrington, De
- Fred Harz & Sons - Elmer, NJ
- USA Gypsum -Denver, Pa
- Allen's Oil & Propone – Vincentown, NJ
- Park Pumps & Controls
- ACR Metal – Womelsdorf, Pa

The report concluded that some farmers would greatly benefit from having their supplies and services nearer to their operation. Some would benefit from regulatory encouragement to develop non-agriculture but farm-based supply, equipment, or service businesses on the farm that would increase farm income and provide a buffer against fluctuations of weather and prices. Others are comfortable with the technology of providers online or through catalogs.

Agricultural Support Needs

Information on key issues affecting farming in Burlington County in **Part 3.8** of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report*. The needs of Burlington County producers are well described in this report. Information related to the following issues, among others include:

- Farm Labor and Related Issues
- Access to Capital
- Farmland Value / Equity Protection
- Taxes
- Costs of Regulation
- Wildlife Damage
- Conflicts with Non-Farm public
- Availability of Farm Supplies / Services

The Rutgers Food Innovation Center was established in 2001 as a component of the NJ Agricultural Experiment Station's network of outlying research stations. The 23,000 sq. ft. facility in Bridgeton, NJ will assist farmers in, among other things, developing and implementing value-added strategies. The center's business and marketing assistance programs include:

- Business plan development
- Marketing plan development
- Product and process development

- Quality assurance and food safety
- Regulatory compliance
- Workforce development and training
- Nutraceutical R&D and commercialization

More information on the Rutgers Food Innovation Center is in **Part 3.10.3** of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report*. Burlington County farmers will benefit from these programs if they are considering implementing value-added strategies. The County's FPP should work towards linking Burlington County farmers with this new center and making them aware of all of the opportunities that are available.

Agriculture is considered as an issue and as a concern in local and regional economic development strategies of local and regional Master Plans. Yet, agricultural leaders and the business interests of farmers are largely underrepresented in all levels of local and regional economic development organizations. That is a condition that should be remedied.

Agricultural Support Implementation

Chapter IX of this Plan contains recommendations for implementing various Agricultural Industry Retention, Expansion and Recruitment Strategies. This Chapter contains information related to implementation. Specific costs, funding opportunities and timelines for each are not available at this time. The County will address details in addition to staffing needs for each recommendation prior to implementation over the next ten years. The pace of implementation for economic development strategies will depending largely on the pace of farmland preservation efforts, which remains the County's highest priority. The County will seek stable long-term funding source(s) for these efforts, outside the scope of the County's general budget when possible.

Agricultural Industry Retention, Expansion, and Promotion Strategies

Goals 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8, as outlined in Chapter IX of this Plan represent the County's Agricultural Industry Retention, Expansion and Recruitment Strategies. These reflect only the County's decision to select the recommendations that is able to realistically implement with existing staff, laws, regulations and program funding over the next ten years.

The County believes that a key variable in a conducive business environment is a local Right to Farm (RTF) ordinance that allows operators of preserved and yet to be preserved farms operate under generally accepted agricultural standards and not be subject to nuisance complaints from non-farm neighbors or over-zealous local zoning ordinances. The County feels so strongly about the existence of local RTF ordinances that it has recommended that **no farms be preserved in municipalities that have not adopted RTF ordinances that, at a minimum, are substantially consistent with the SADC model ordinance.**

Existing Agricultural Industry Support – The Right to Farm Act

This state law protects farmers from nearby residents who complain about normal farming operations such as noise, odors, and dust. It also protects farmers from unnecessary ordinances or regulations that may restrict farming operations. The State of

New Jersey adopted the Right-to-Farm Act in 1983 and amended it in 1998. The Act declares that the "protection of commercial farm operations from nuisance action, where recognized methods and techniques of agricultural production are applied, while, at the same time, acknowledging the need to provide a proper balance among the varied and sometimes conflicting interests of all lawful activities in New Jersey." The Act stipulates the types of activities a farm may engage in as well as the steps for various agencies to follow in reviewing disputes regarding any farm activity.

The SADC works to maximize protections for commercial farmers under the Right to Farm Act by developing Agricultural Management Practices (AMPs), tracking right to farm cases, offering a conflict resolution process, and reviewing rules proposed by other state agencies for the impact they may have on agriculture.

In order to qualify for Right to Farm protection a farm must meet the definition of a "commercial farm" in the Right to Farm Act; be operated in conformance with federal and state law; comply with AMPs recommended by the SADC, or site specific AMPs developed by the CADB at the request of a commercial farmer; must not be a direct threat to public health and safety; and, must be located in an area where agriculture was a permitted use under municipal zoning ordinances as of December 31, 1997, or thereafter; or, must have been an operating farm as of December 31, 1997.

All Right to Farm complaints or issues that can be brought before the CADB are first handled with fact finding, and efforts to resolve differences between the parties. The mediation can be informal or, if the parties agree, the SADC will provide mediation or conflict resolution at no cost to the participants through its Agricultural Mediation Program. If a formal complaint is filed with the CADB, it is sent to the SADC for a determination as to whether the farm falls within the parameters established by the Act for Right to Farm protection. Once the complaint is returned to the CADB from the SADC, additional fact finding and technical review occurs and the issue is given a public, quasi-judicial hearing at the county level. After all information has been considered, the CADB will make a determination as to whether the agricultural activity is protected by the Right to Farm Act or whether changes to the operation will be required. If the issue is not resolved by the CADB determination, either party in the dispute may take the matter for a subsequent appeal and determination to the New Jersey Office of Administrative Law.

The CADBs are given statutory authority in the Agriculture Retention and Development Act to:

> *"Monitor and make appropriate recommendations to the SADC and to county and municipal governing bodies and boards with respect to resolutions, ordinances, regulations and development approvals which would threaten the continued viability of agricultural activities and farmland preservation programs within agricultural areas (ADA)." (N.J.S.A. 4:1C-15 (f).*

Having strong local pro-agricultural ordinances and development regulations can increase the likelihood of mediating conflicts between farmers and non-farmers and/or municipal officials without formal actions such as issuance of citations and/or nuisance lawsuits. Good communication and when necessary, compromise by the farm and/or the complaining parties will also be essential in promoting a positive business environment for farming to continue in Burlington County.

These local land use ordinances and regulations are a very effective tool in retaining the agricultural industry since it impacts all farms (not just those preserved or targeted for preservation) and requires little to no public funding to implement.

It is important to note that municipalities that have adopted pro-agricultural ordinances and ordinances identified as Right to Farm ordinances need to ensure that the ordinances are consistent with the current RTF regulations. From time to time the SADC will undertake efforts to establish new Agricultural Management Practices (AMPs) that address some of the most recent and most common issues that arise in NJ agriculture. Right to Farm ordinances are important as they often become the first level of awareness for landowners and municipal officials alike. However, any contradictions or inconsistencies within municipal ordinances will be superseded by the adopted state regulations.

Most recently the SADC adopted a RTF AMP that addresses the increase in direct marketing that occurs on farms throughout the state. This AMP provides a detailed explanation as to the types of direct marketing activities and events and their associated site improvements that are eligible to receive RTF protections.

Jerome Frecon, Agricultural Agent, with the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES), Rutgers Cooperative Extension issued a report entitled "Resolving Common Farm Management Practices," which cited some of the most common questions posed to NJ Extension Agents related to the following management practices:

a) Spraying or pesticide application;
b) Irrigation – water issues and noise from pumps;
c) Direct marketing – signs, hours of operation, products sold;
d) Slow moving and dust making vehicles like tractors;
e) Burning hedgerows and pruning;
f) Wildlife depredation trapping and hunting;
g) Animal odors and other animal practices;
h) Trucks and other large equipment;
i) Noisemaking cannons and other devices to repel birds;
j) Farm labor and labor housing;
k) Dumping and spreading deteriorating fruits and vegetables;
l) Noise, dust and odors form specialized equipment.

Frecon states that he has observed that "frequently I can deflect further problems for farmers by being honest and giving the questioner accurate and science-based information. If I can't, I direct them to someone who might be able to help them in another department or at the state level. If they do not accept what I tell them then I explain the RTF Law that may exist in their municipality and the state law. This avenue is available to them to vent and resolve their frustration and dissatisfaction with agricultural management practices."

The County's FPP has established formal policies to deal with requests for SSAMP determinations and formal conflict resolution. This policy is consistent with the SADC policies governing these matters. This process was established to provide farmers, neighbors and municipalities a better understanding of how these issues are dealt with and the limits of the RTF Act.

A copy of the CADB policies governing SSAMP determinations and Conflict Resolution decisions is provided in Appendix H.

Goal 3 in Chapter IX provides strategies to promote and protect the RTF in Burlington County. It is by no mistake the ***promotion*** of the RTF is placed ahead of protection. Promoting and establishing effective RTF and pro-agribusiness ordinances at the local level is the clear priority. This will create a better business environment for farmers, instill a better understanding of their operational needs and minimize the situations where the Burlington CADB has to go through the cumbersome process of making SSAMP / conflict resolution decisions.

Existing Agricultural Industry Support – Farmland Assessment

Differential property tax assessment allows land actively devoted to an agricultural or horticultural use to be taxed on its farm value instead of its development value. All land qualifying for farmland assessment must meet a minimum income threshold from the sale of the agricultural output of the farm. The threshold begins at $1000 for the first five acres. Farmers are not exempt from property taxes. Farmers pay the same property taxes as all other households on their homes, driveways, garages, swimming pools, etc. They also pay market value taxes on the structures (barns, sheds, fences, etc.) on the farm. Farmland Assessment is the prerogative of the local municipal tax assessor. That being said, the County's FPP should be knowledgeable regarding farmland assessment eligibility criteria and provide established documents such as what was prepared by the NJDA. This can be found at:

https://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/anr/pdf/farmlandassessmentoverview.pdf

This document provides in simple terms the criteria and process by which farms in New Jersey establish and maintain differential tax assessment.

Existing Agricultural Industry Support – Other Strategies

Permit Streamlining

Progress on permit streamlining assumes the cooperation and coordination between agencies / departments of local, county and state jurisdictions. Burlington County's role in this is minor, except for road and drainage issues. In its role, Burlington County will seek to balance the needs of farmers with the obligation to protect the safety of those traveling on County roads. The County will work to insert the needs of the agricultural industry into the discussions with state and federal agencies related to new plans, grants opportunities and projects.

Agricultural Vehicle Movement / Routes

Burlington County farmers need to move heavy, slow moving agricultural equipment over local, county and sometimes state roads to access unconnected fields and barns. It is their usual practice to do this very early in the morning to avoid as much as possible conflicts with other vehicles. Farmers must put their opinions on that table when road and bridge improvements are being considered at the local, county and state level. Public officials should be considerate of these concerns as not to create unintended consequences for the farm community by creating barriers and inconveniences for them as they try and conduct their business. Short of cooperation between the farmers and those responsible for oversight of public roads, avoidance seems to be the best strategy for farmers to deal with conflicts with other vehicles.

Agricultural Labor Housing

As discussed earlier, sectors of the agricultural industry are expanding in Burlington County (e.g., equine, nursery, fruit / vegetable production) in which an adequate and/or specialized labor supply is integral to the operation. The CADB has acted on several labor housing requests for these sectors and has been guided during its review by the Deed of Easement and SADC policies for agricultural labor housing. The CADB considers, among other things, the size, number and type of laborers to be housed, and impact on the agricultural operation. After the CADB and Freeholder Board approve the request, the request is forwarded to the SADC whose staff then reviews and provides a staff recommendation for SADC consideration.

Part 3.8.1 of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report* contains information related to farm labor, farm worker regulation and agricultural labor housing.

Wildlife Management Strategies

Wildlife management is very important for the retention of agriculture. Crop losses to birds, deer and other animals can be significant. Netting, fencing, hunting, air cannons and other techniques are all employed by Burlington County farmers to deter crop depredation. Burlington County is also considering a yearly organized deer hunt within certain lands of the County's Park System.

Part 3.8.6 of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report* contains information related to wildlife damage.

Agricultural Education / Promotion

Part 4.4 of the *Agriculture in Burlington County's Route 206 Farm Belt: Current Industry Status and Trends Report* contains information related to agricultural education at the elementary, secondary, adult and college level, and the agriculture leadership training program of the NJDA.

Farmland preservation must go beyond the purchase of development easements and make the effort to ensure that the agricultural industry remains not only a viable component of the county's economy, but a major part of the county's character and lifestyle. Education and training for farmers promotes a more efficient and productive business environment. Rutgers Cooperative Extension Offices in Burlington County is doing just that. Burlington County supports the NJDA's commitment to promoting agritourism through the New Jersey Office of Travel and Tourism, the *Jersey Fresh* website, the distribution of printed materials, and other forms of advertisement. The CADB supports the efforts of the SADC to advance an agritourism AMP. Several Burlington County farmers open their farms to elementary and middle school student groups to educate them about agriculture. The Burlington County 4H has a growing group of young people interested in agricultural activities.

The County's efforts for educating the public at the BCCAC were chronicled earlier in this chapter.

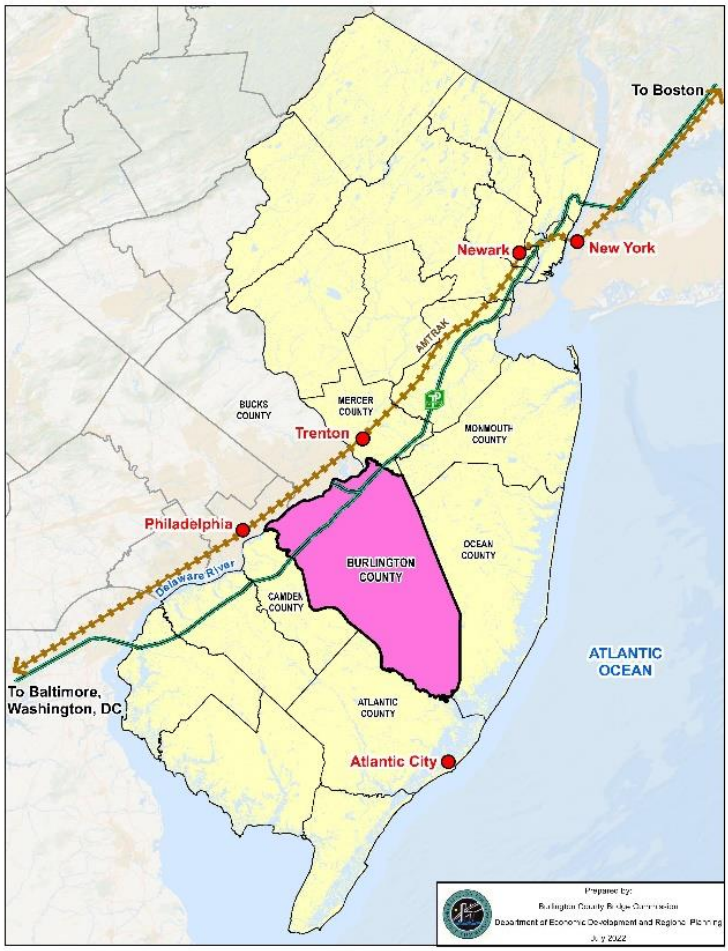
Chapter IX includes specific strategies related to achieving a sustainable agricultural industry in Burlington County.

Chapter VII
Land Use Planning Context

This section of the Plan explores the land use planning context for farmland preservation and agricultural retention in Burlington County.

Burlington County is centrally located in the Boston-New York-Philadelphia-Washington Corridor. Located in the south-central portion of New Jersey, Burlington County, at approximately 820 square miles in size, is the largest county in land area in the state.

The 2020 Census reported that Burlington County was home to 461,860 residents, making it the 11th most populous of the 21 counties in New Jersey. This marks a 2.9% increase from the County's population of 448,734 in 2010. Consisting of 40 municipalities, Burlington is the only county in New Jersey to extend the full width of the state from its western boundary on the Delaware River to the Great Bay on the Atlantic Ocean. The county is strategically located 10 miles from Center City Philadelphia, and 90 miles from Midtown Manhattan in New York City. Burlington County is bounded on the north by Mercer County, on the northeast by Monmouth County, on the east by Ocean County, on the south by Atlantic County and on the southwest by Camden County. Across the Delaware River, lies the City of Philadelphia and Bucks County, Pennsylvania on the west.



Burlington County's landscape is diverse, consisting of rural, suburban and urban settings. According to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's 2015 Land Use Analysis, Burlington County is 9.6% residential, 10.7% other developed land uses, 15.5% agricultural, and 64.1% undeveloped. Compared the 2005 data, the County saw a 3.9% increase in residential uses, a 7.2% increase in other developed lands uses, a 2.9% decrease in agriculture uses, and a 0.9% decrease in undeveloped land uses.

Table 17
Burlington County Land Use - 2015

Land Use	Area (Acres)	Percent of Total Area
Residential	50,504	9.6%
Industrial	2,127	0.4%
Transportation/Utilities	28,958	5.5%
Commercial	8,495	1.6%
Military/Mining	5,708	1.1%
Recreation/Community Services	11,172	2.1%
Agriculture	81,455	15.5%
Wooded	295,542	56.3%
Vacant	25,832	4.9%
Water	14,911	2.8%
Total	524,704	100.0%

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Analytical Data Report, Land Use in the Delaware Valley, 2015, ADR 024, February 2017

According the State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, there were 980 building permits for new housing units issued in Burlington County in 2020. Of that total 41% were 1&2 family permits and 59% were multi-family permits. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the number of 2020 permits were less than 2018 and 2019 but higher than every year since 2006. The year 2018 saw a shift in more multi-family building permits than 1&2 family permits. In 2020, building permits were issued for 5,701,00 square-feet of nonresidential space in Burlington County, which represented the 2nd highest total since 2005. Of the 2020 total, 75% was storage space, which includes warehouses and distribution centers.

The New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve, which is home to dozens of rare animal and plant species, was formed in 1978 and is the country's first national reserve. The New Jersey Pinelands Commission (NJPC) was created in 1979 to preserve, protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources by implementing the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. The 1.1-million-acre reserve covers the southern and eastern two-thirds of Burlington County. Approximately 64 percent of Burlington County's land area is under the jurisdiction of NJPC.

Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB MDL) is 42,000-continguous acres located in eastern Burlington County and Western Ocean County. It is home to more than 80 mission partners and 40 mission commanders providing a wide range of combat capability and is the second largest employer in New Jersey. Service members and their family members living and working on and around JB MDL contribute to an overall economic impact of more than $6.9 billion to the State of New Jersey.

Agriculture remains an important industry mainly in the northern and central portions of the county, especially along the U.S. 206 corridor (Southampton, Springfield, Tabernacle and Pemberton Townships). Specialty crops, such as blueberries and cranberries, are grown in the Pinelands area of the County. The majority of suburban and urban communities occupy the remaining one-third of Burlington County. The western section is dominated by post-war single-family subdivisions and highway commercial nodes in Evesham, Mount Laurel and Moorestown Townships. Along the Delaware River, many established communities, such as Riverside, Burlington City and Bordentown City have retained their commercial downtown nodes, small-town character and historic charm. The rise of e-Commerce has caused a surge of new warehouses and distribution centers in the northern portion of the County in proximity to the highway interchanges, especially in Florence, Burlington, Mansfield, and Bordentown Townships.

Burlington County is served by the following highways: Interstate 295, Interstate 95, the New Jersey Turnpike, the Garden State Parkway, U.S. Routes 130 and 206, State Routes 38, 68, 70, 72 and 73, and several major County Routes, such as 537, 541, 542, 543 and 563. Three bridges link the County to Pennsylvania: the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge, the Burlington-Bristol Bridge, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike Extension Bridge, which connects into the New Jersey Turnpike.

Light rail passenger service is provided along the riverfront communities by New Jersey Transit's RiverLINE, which connects the cities of Camden and Trenton, with several intermediate stops in Burlington County. Freight rail service is provided along the riverfront communities and to some of the interior communities, serving various industrial facilities. The county has deep water port capabilities--the Delaware River channel is 40 feet deep and has ocean-going vessel traffic as far north as the Burlington-Bristol area. The county has numerous marinas along the Delaware River, Rancocas Creek and Great Harbor, including the largest recreational marina on the Delaware River.

The County is committed to preserving open space and linking parks and natural areas with multi-use trails and paths. Bicycle and pedestrian mobility are important to the communities within the County. As of today, only a few designated on-road bicycle facilities exist; however, the Burlington County Bicycle Master Plan (June 2014) proposes a comprehensive network along several routes throughout the County including the Delaware River Heritage Trail and Rancocas creek Greenway.

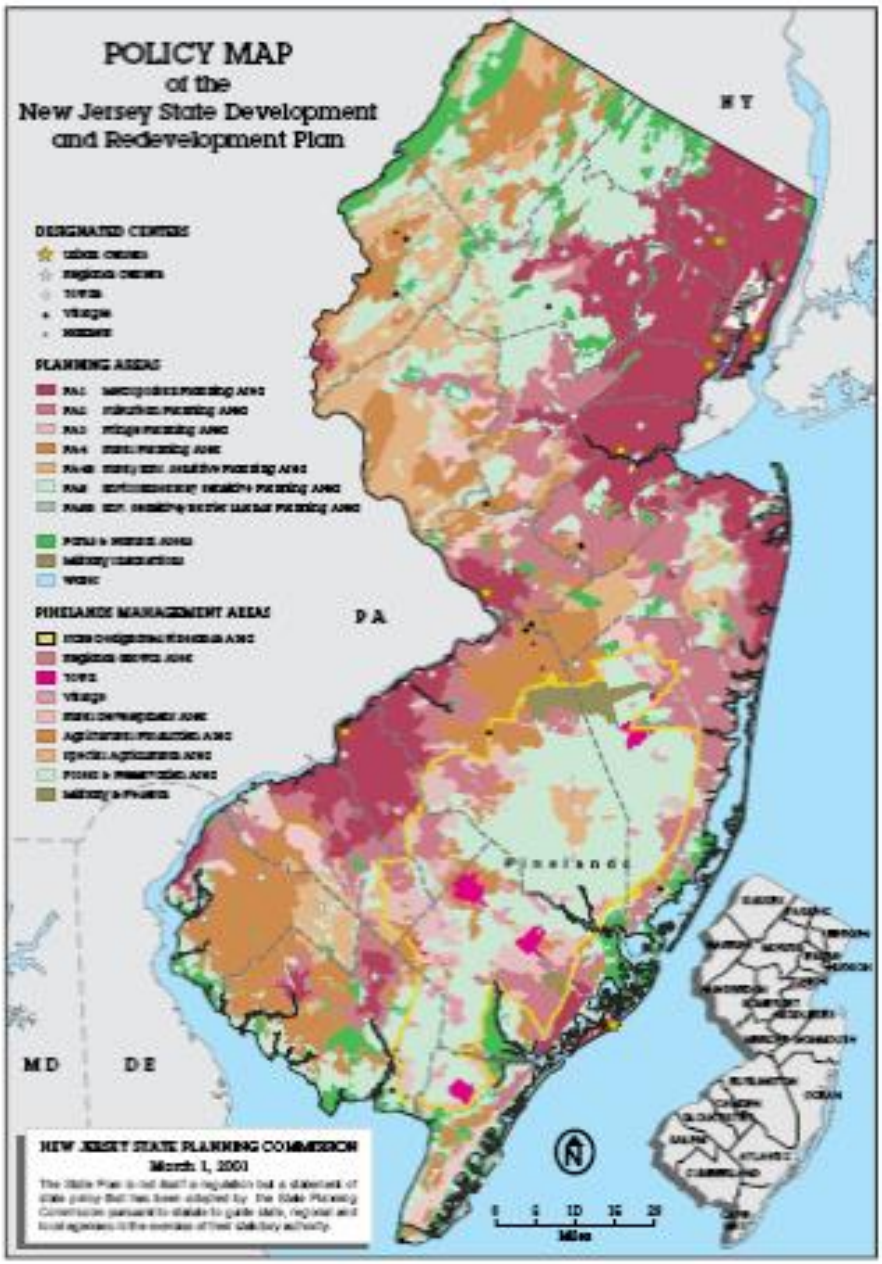
NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP)

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan, which reaffirms the original 1992 State Plan, was adopted by the New Jersey State Planning Commission on March 1, 2001. The Plan seeks to implement the eight State Plan Goals resulting from the State Planning Act of 1985 through a series of statewide policies and the State Plan Policy Map.

The purpose of New Jersey's State Plan is to:

"Coordinate planning activities and establish Statewide planning objectives in the following areas: land use, housing, economic development, transportation, natural resource conservation, agriculture and farmland retention, recreation, urban and suburban redevelopment, historic preservation, public facilities and services, and intergovernmental coordination (N.J.S.A. 52:18A-200(f))."

The State Plan Policy Map is intended to serve as the underlying land use-planning and management framework that directs funding, infrastructure improvements, and preservation for programs throughout New Jersey.



As discussed in Chapter II of this plan, the focus of the County's farmland preservation efforts is its designated ADA's. Burlington County's Current ADA Policy relies heavily on the State Plan Policy Map since land must be in the Rural Planning Areas (PA 4 / PA 4B), Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (PA 5) or the NJ Pinelands (PA 10). In addition, land in TDR Receiving Areas, Regional Planning Centers or land designated for affordable housing obligations as certified by the COAH are not in the County ADA unless certain very specific criteria are met.

The State Plan provides a balance between growth and conservation by designating planning areas that share common conditions with regard to development and environmental features:

- Areas for Growth: Metropolitan Planning areas (Planning Area 1), Suburban Planning Areas (Planning Area 2) and Designated Centers in any planning area.
- Areas for Limited Growth: Fringe Planning Areas (Planning Area 3), Rural Planning Areas (Planning Area 4), and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (Planning Area 5). In these planning areas, planning should promote a balance of conservation and limited growth—environmental constraints affect development and preservation is encouraged in large contiguous tracts.
- Areas for Conservation: Fringe Planning Area (Planning Area 3), Rural Planning Areas (Planning Area 4), and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (Planning Area 5).

The County believes that the preservation of farmland in PA 4, PA 4B, PA 5 and PA 10 is wholly consistent with the goals of the State Plan and is one of the best and most fundamental methods to implement the State Plan. The State Plan recommends that growth in these Planning Areas be limited and conservation practices be promoted.

According to the State Plan;

Rural Planning Areas are intended to "maintain the Environs as large contiguous areas of farmland and other lands; revitalize cities and towns; accommodate growth in Centers; promote a viable agricultural industry; protect the character of existing stable communities; and confine programmed sewers and public water services to Centers.

The open lands of the Rural Planning Areas include most of New Jersey's prime farmland, which has the greatest potential of sustaining continued agricultural activities in the future, and wooded tracts. These areas, along with the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area, serve as the greensward for the larger region and are not currently nor are they intended to be urban or suburban in nature."

The Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area designation intends to "protect environmental resources through the protection of large contiguous areas of land; accommodate growth in Centers; protect the character of existing stable communities; confine programmed sewers and public water services to Centers; and revitalize cities and towns."

The State Plan encourages new growth and redevelopment in designated centers of the State. Centers are designated based on their size, population density and existing infrastructure. The most urban center designation is an Urban Center, followed in order by Regional Centers, Towns, Villages and Hamlets.

In 1999, the NJSPC and the NJPC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOA) that served to define the roles of each entity. In general, the MOA affirms that, in the Pinelands Areas, the NJSPC shall rely on the adopted plan and regulations of the NJPC in developing the SDRP. In addition, it promotes consistency between the policies, standards and practices of each entity and in particular, establishes equivalency between NJPC Management Areas and NJSPC Planning Areas.

As such, the following centers in Burlington County within the Pinelands were established under Appendix C of the MOA:

- Bass River Township – New Gretna (Village)
- Woodland – Chatsworth (Village)
- Washington Township – Green Bank (Hamlet), Jenkins (Hamlet), Lower Bank (Hamlet)
- Shamong Township – Indian Mills (Hamlet)
- Pemberton Township – New Lisbon (Hamlet)
- Tabernacle Township – Tabernacle (Hamlet)
- Southampton Township – Vincentown (Village)*

* Established in conjunction with non-Pinelands section of Vincentown

Appendix B designated Medford Lakes Borough a "town" center. Medford Lakes Borough is in a Pinelands Regional Growth Area.

In addition, the following equivalency between the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) and the NJSPC Planning Areas was established:

Figure H

Planning Areas and Pinelands Management Areas

Planning Area	Corresponding Pinelands Management Area(s)[1]
Metropolitan Planning Area	N/A
Suburban Planning Area	Regional Growth Area[2]
Fringe Planning Area	Rural Development Area
Rural Planning Area	Agricultural Production Area & Forest Area
Rural Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area	Special Agricultural Production Area & Agricultural Production Area
Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area	Forest Area, Preservation Area District & Special Agricultural Production Area
See Appendix B	Pinelands Towns
See Appendix C	Pinelands Villages

Further discussion regarding the Pinelands Region is provided in the next section of this Chapter.

The SDRP outlines many agricultural policies and specific land use techniques that should be implemented in the agricultural regions of the state. These are areas with most of New Jersey's prime farmland, which has the greatest potential of sustaining the agricultural industry in the future. In these planning areas, growth should be focused in existing and

new rural centers where development is mixed in use and compact. Ideally, the areas outside of these centers are maintained for agriculture by using planning techniques that address landowner equity and support farming.

Recognizing the importance of **equity**, the NJSPC made it the number-one statewide policy of the State Plan, adopted first in 1992 and again in 2001. The NJDA's Agricultural Smart Growth Plan reflects the NJSPC's position that "the achievement, protection and maintenance of equity be a major objective in public policy decisions…" **From the inception of Burlington County's Farmland Preservation Program, the Freeholder Board and the CADB have viewed the maintenance of equity as an underlying principle of its efforts. This Plan seeks to continue that tradition.**

Special Resource Areas

As discussed in Chapter IV, **63.8 percent** (334,287 acres) of Burlington County is within the jurisdiction of the **NJPC** containing roughly 46 percent of the County's Agricultural Land Base.

The following is excerpted from the NJPC website:

Congress created the Pinelands National Reserve (PNR) through the passage of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978. The PNR is the first National Reserve in the United States.

The PNR is approximately 1.1 million acres and spans portions of seven counties and all or part of 56 municipalities. The reserve occupies 22% of New Jersey's land area and it is the largest body of open space on the Mid-Atlantic seaboard between Richmond and Boston.

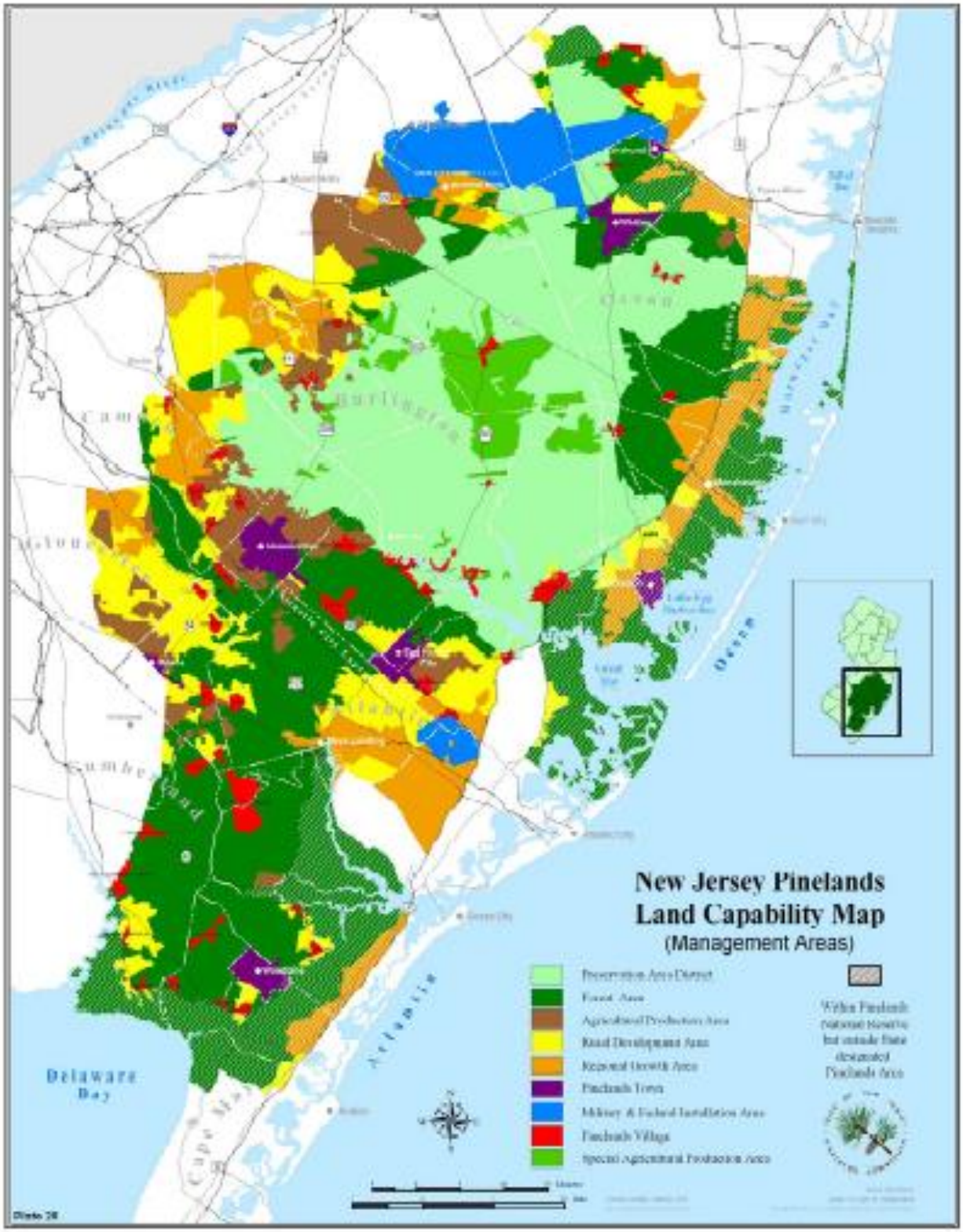
The reserve is home to dozens of rare plant and animal species and the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer system, which contains an estimated 17 trillion gallons of water. In 1979, New Jersey formed a partnership with the federal government to preserve, protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources of this special place.

Through its implementation of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, the New Jersey Pinelands Commission protects the Pinelands in a manner that maintains the region's unique ecology while permitting compatible development.

The CMP is administered by the NJPC in cooperation with units of local, state and federal governments. Essentially, though the NJPC, through the CMP sets the standards for land use in the Pinelands, all municipalities have had their ordinances certified by the NJPC so essentially they remain primary jurisdiction for most local decisions. According to the CMP, municipalities that have land within the Pinelands Area must conform their master plan and land use ordinances to the minimum standards set forth in the CMP.

Agriculture, including blueberries and cranberries, as well as row and field crops, is extremely important to the region's economy. New Jersey is among the top states in the nation in the production of blueberries and cranberries, and virtually all of these are grown in the Pinelands. Other major industries are recreation, resource related industries, construction (on the periphery), and shell fishing.

The CMP designates, much like the State Plan all of the land within the NJ Pinelands into distinct management areas. These management areas are depicted in the map below.



The County's Farmland Preservation efforts in the Pinelands are focused on the following Management Areas:

- **Agricultural Production Area:** Areas of active agricultural use, generally upland field agriculture and row crops, including adjacent areas with soils suitable for expansion of agricultural operations.

- **Special Agriculture Production Area:** Primarily used for berry agriculture and horticulture of native Pinelands plants.

- **Rural Development Area**: Primarily a transitional area that balances environmental and development values between conservation and growth areas

Further information regarding the NJPC or the CMP can be found at:

www.state.nj.us/pinelands

Within the Pinelands there are areas of Burlington County impacted by the Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA) (N.J.S.A. 13:19). These areas do not include any agricultural resources and as such, no more discussion is provided in this Plan.

County Master Plan and Development Regulations

The Board of County Commissioners has been at the vanguard of "smart growth" for many years by maintaining a balance between development and natural resource preservation efforts. Burlington County strives to enhance development and preservation by promoting sustainable growth in areas best suited for it, curbing sprawl by encouraging well designed development in areas with sufficient existing or planned infrastructure, promoting a viable agricultural industry and preserving a land base of farm land and open space for future agriculture and recreation.

Burlington County seeks to sustain moderate, steady growth through 2032 by maintaining a diversified and agile economy of business, industry and services; a wide range of housing opportunities; modern and well-integrated infrastructure systems; and cultural and recreational opportunities that contribute to, sustain and enhance the County's high quality of life.

Planning in Burlington County government is closely connected to the Board of County Commissioners. The Burlington County Bridge Commission office of Economic Development and Regional Planning (EDRP) hosts the County's long-range, strategic "smart growth" planning activities, such as those for the Route 130 Corridor and Route 206 Corridor, as well as the county's economic development, community development, workforce development and tourism functions. This agency provides planning services to local communities seeking assistance in updating land use elements, preparing redevelopment plans and completing special studies that enable these communities to achieve Plan Endorsement and generally enhance their ability to independently access and effectively use outside funding and technical resources.

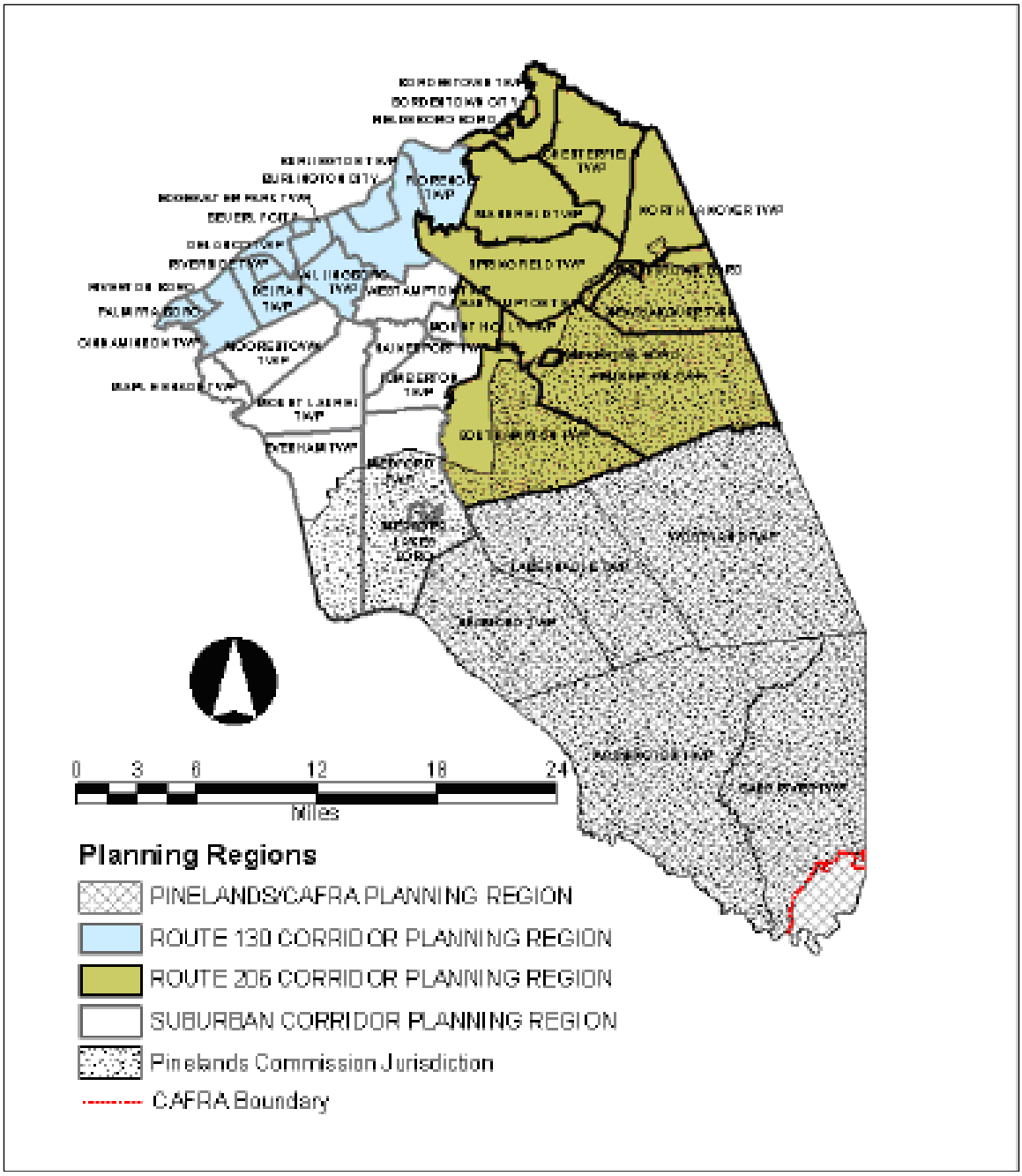
The Burlington County DRC plans and manages critical water resources, solid waste, parks, farmland preservation and historic preservation programs and staffs the county's TDR Bank Board. The Department of Engineering is responsible for planning and designing the county's highway system, the largest in New Jersey, and bridges, and staffs the Burlington County Planning Board in its statutory authority to review land development projects affecting county roads and draining facilities. The Department of Health is active in implementing the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health in coordination with the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for responding to factors, including land use, affecting environmental quality and human health. The Department of Information Technology includes a GIS section providing data management, special studies, technical assistance, software support and overall coordination for the county's extensive collection of spatial data and increasing number of GIS users.

In contrast to many other counties in New Jersey, Burlington County does not have an adopted County Master Plan. Burlington County has approached planning from a regional perspective instead. The EDRP website contains various reports and planning information specific to each one of these regions. To date planning efforts by the County and the EDRP have been focused on the Route 130 and Route 206 Corridor regions. Planning efforts within the Pinelands Region have largely been assumed by the Pinelands Commission via the Pineland Comprehensive Management Plan and the respective municipalities within the Pinelands. The Suburban Corridor Planning Region has not been the focus of EDRP and County planning efforts. However, this does not reflect a lack of support for agricultural retention and the preservation of farms that meet the County ADA and ATL criteria. The County's DRC works closely with all municipalities, including those in the Suburban Planning Region to target and preserve those farms that meet the goals of the Farmland Preservation Program. More information on the County's planning regions can be found at the following:

- Route 130 Corridor Planning Region – https://www.bcbridges.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/RT130EXESUMM.pdf

- Route 206 Corridor Planning Region (the "Farm Belt") – https://www.bcbridges.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ED-RP-012918-NBC-GAPP-ExecSumm-1.pdf

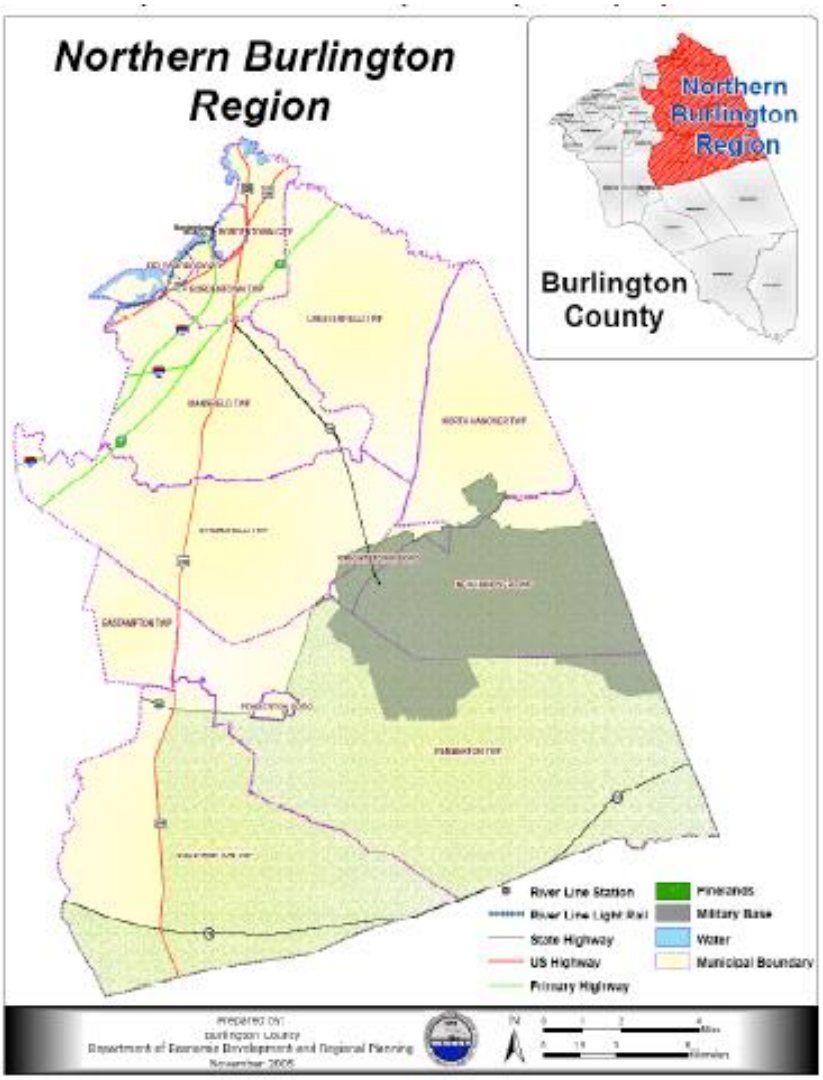
- Pinelands / CAFRA Planning Region – https://www.nj.gov/pinelands/cmp/index.shtml



The Freeholder Board authorized the preparation of the regional strategic plan for Northern Burlington County (the Route 206 Corridor - Farm Belt) in 2002. As part of the Northern Burlington County Strategic Plan a technical report (the "Technical Report") was produced to understand that regional context of the planning area and to lay "important groundwork for assisting municipalities in planning for smart, sustainable growth and development balanced with farmland preservation."

The Northern Burlington County planning region, the subject of this study, generally straddles U.S. Route 206 and extends south approximately 21 miles from the Mercer County border at the Crosswicks Creek to the northwestern border of the New Jersey

Pinelands. It is comprised of all or parts of the following thirteen municipalities in Northern Burlington County.



The Technical Report provides a thorough review of the regional context for this regional planning area.

In the Technical Report, it was found that “pressures for residential development from both within and outside Burlington County are more substantial and immediate than at any time in the region's history, threatening to undermine this public investment (in farmland preservation).” The report asserts that municipalities in the Northern Burlington County planning region need to coordinate their response with each other and with County and State agencies through regional planning strategies to ensure that future development patterns will protect the region's rural character, quality of life, and agricultural industry.

The **key findings** of the report were:

1. The zoned development potential of the Northern Burlington County planning region will not allow it to maintain its predominantly rural character and will likely harm the viability of agriculture. There is a build-out potential of an additional 22,000 residents, 8,000 dwelling units, and 200,000 jobs.

2. The Northern Burlington County planning region reaches residential build-out by 2025.

3. Current zoned residential development densities in the rural communities do not seem supportive of the development of centers. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of all developable lands (94% of residential) in the Northern Burlington County planning region are zoned for lots of 3 acres or more in area. Additionally, residential neighborhoods in rural communities are built at fairly low densities, usually at 1 – 2 dwelling units per acre. The existing residential zoning appears to promote sprawl.

4. Higher development densities and community-scale wastewater management systems are necessary if centers are to become a realistic growth organizing principle for the rural communities of Northern Burlington County

5. The Northern Burlington County planning region appears to be over-zoned for nonresidential uses. The non-residential build-out potential is not likely to occur anytime within the next 50 years, nor is it likely to be desirable from a quality of life standpoint.

6. As the Northern Burlington County region reaches residential build-out, there will be an increasing demand to rezone nonresidential lands to residential uses.

7. Planning for agriculture needs to occur at the municipal, county and state levels. Municipal master plans and zoning ordinances need to recognize agriculture as an "industrial" use, just like they recognize other industrial uses.

8. Development corridors exist throughout the Northern Burlington County planning region and cannot be ignored. Properly planned, and in appropriate locations, development corridors can be an appropriate way to organize growth.

9. Development nodes exist throughout the Northern Burlington County planning region. Almost always, they are located at the intersections of major roads. Properly planned, and in appropriate locations, development nodes can be an appropriate way to organize growth.

10. Alternate planning and zoning approaches promoting "Smart Growth" are needed to avoid sprawl and the loss of rural character resulting from development standards that are embedded in current municipal zoning ordinances.

Based on these findings, the following **recommendations** were made and are largely applicable as of the date of this updated Plan:

1. Adopt a new development strategy with a system of centers and corridors as its basis instead of sprawl, or spread out, development.

2. Replace existing zoning with provisions and mechanisms that inevitably establish growth patterns that are consistent with regional and local plans, with quality of life goals and objectives, and with landowner equity.

3. Advance mechanisms such as cluster development, non-contiguous parcel density transfer and transfer of development rights to support more concentrated development jointly with increased preservation of farmland and protection of environmentally sensitive lands through private market activities.

4. Establish higher development densities and wastewater management systems where centers and nodes become the growth organizing principle for rural communities.

5. Prepare new, or update existing, municipal environmental resource inventories to determine what important environmental resources need to be protected from development and to guide development to areas where adverse environmental impacts are minimal.

6. Coordinate municipal land development and infrastructure activities with Burlington County's open space initiative in developing a regional greenway system through the regional strategic plan.

7. Recognize agriculture as an "industrial" use in municipal master plans and zoning ordinances based on the similarities between agricultural and industrial operations with regard to noise, odors, traffic and other impacts, and support county and state economic development initiatives aimed toward maintaining the economic (business) viability of agriculture.

8. Establish farmland preservation elements in the master plans of municipalities in the Northern Farm Belt and the Southern Farm Belt sub-regions that both target parcels of land for preservation and address the land use issues that impacts the economic viability of agriculture.

9. Diversify local economies in municipalities surrounding Fort Dix and McGuire Air Force Base, now Joint Base M-D-L, to avoid depending on the military for their economic futures, despite the proposed $300 million 'Megabase' investment.

10. Identify areas in need of redevelopment and prepare municipal redevelopment plans in accordance with the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law.

11. Provide technical and financial resources to support municipal efforts to update and refine municipal master plans, capital improvement plans and development ordinances that are consistent with their long-term vision.

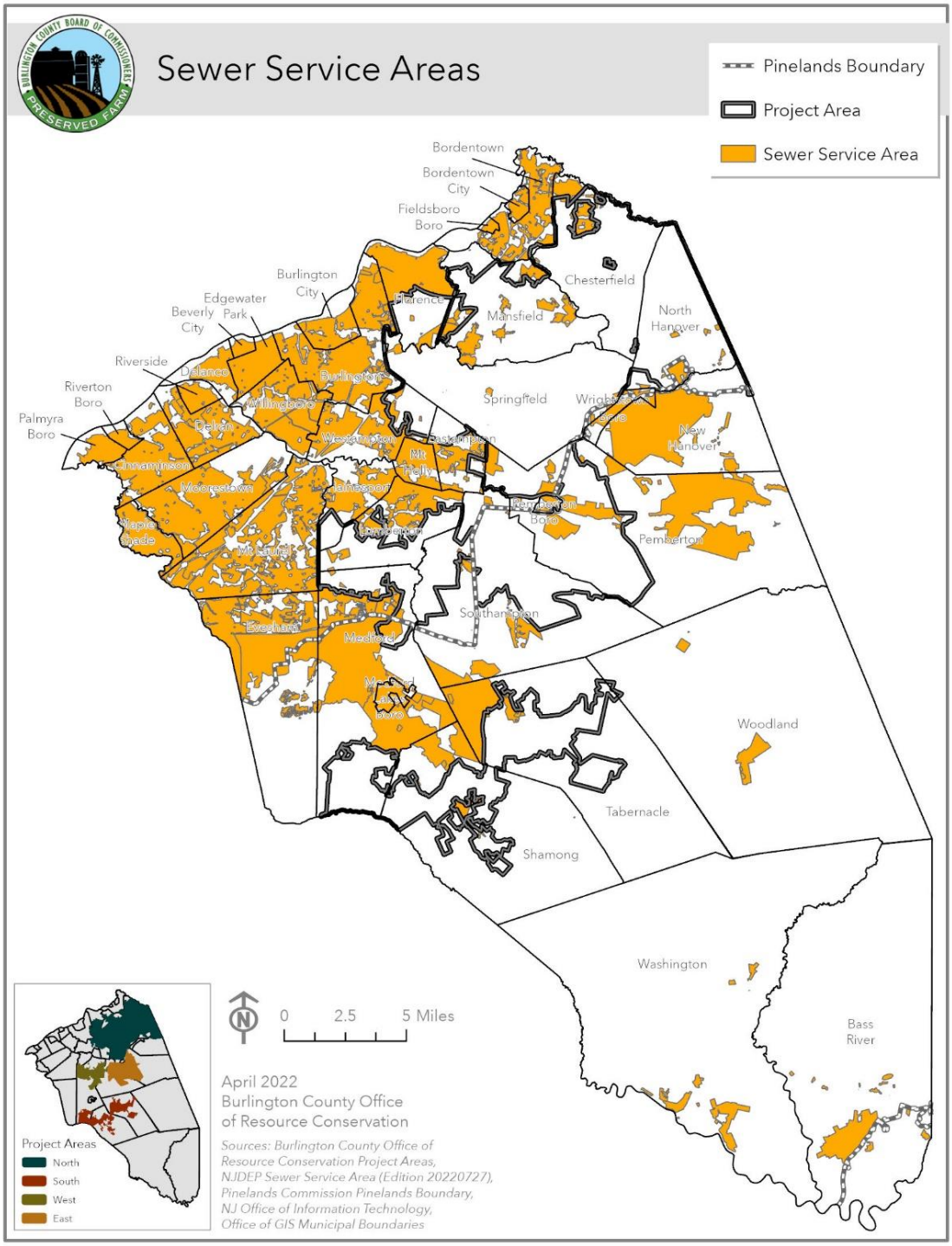
12. Prepare and update municipal wastewater management plans that promote development in centers at appropriate densities.

13. Prepare corridor development plans for existing and potential growth corridors that incorporate and manage growth corridors within the network of towns, villages, hamlets and nodes, and

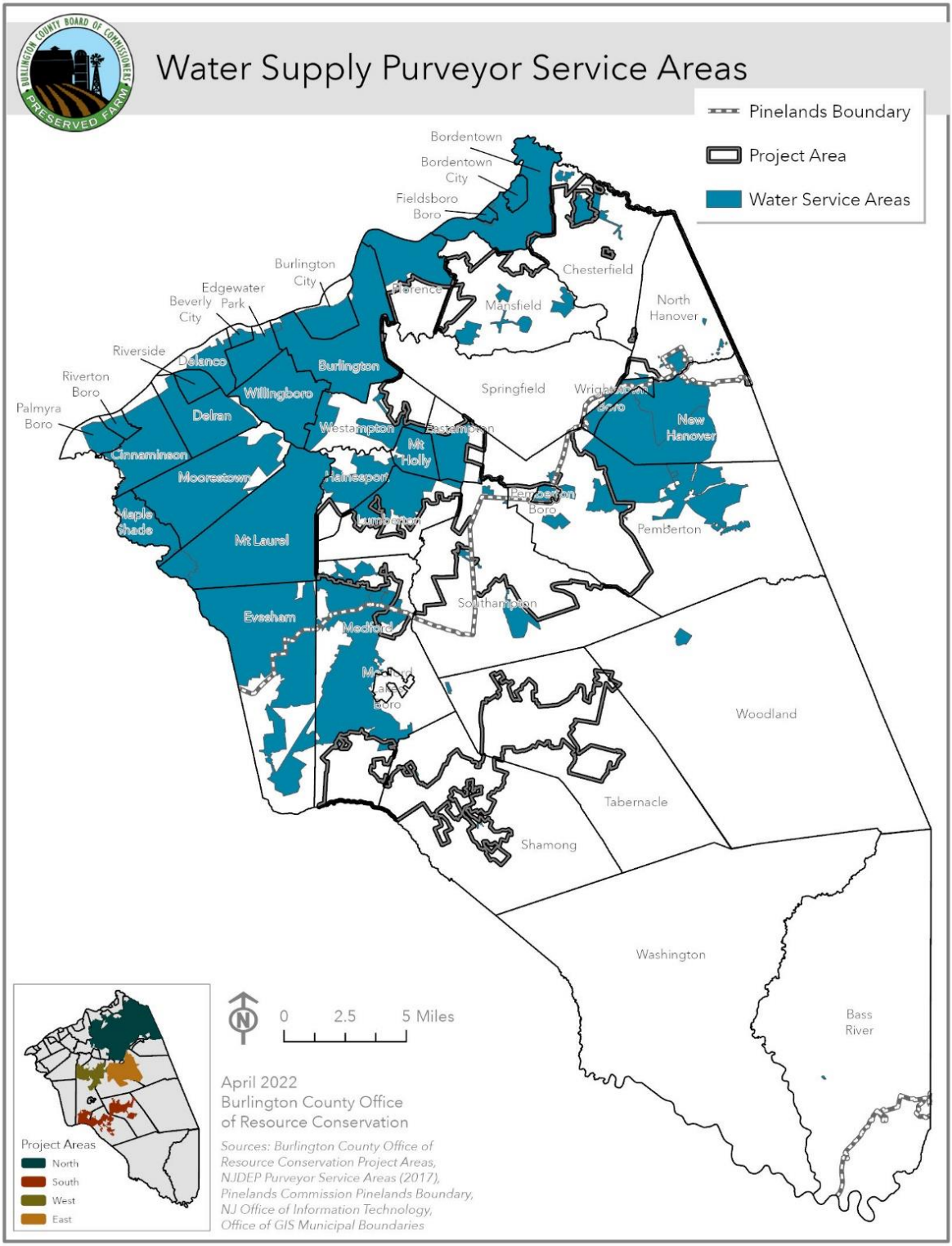
14. Develop standards for creating development nodes to ensure they are mixed-use, minimize land consumption and automobile use, and managed within the network of towns, villages, hamlets and growth corridors.

Public Infrastructure Decisions

Another goal of the County's related to land use planning is to ensure that the decisions made related to the future expansion of sewer and public water service areas sufficiently consider the impact on the County's agricultural resources. The following maps represent the extent of sewer service areas and areas where public water is available within the County.



The County continues to coordinate with municipalities to establish and amend, as necessary, their sewer service areas to be consistent with their local land use objectives, zoning ordinances and sewer treatment facility capacity.



The NJDEP has adopted water quality management planning rules that are intended to address the impacts of septic systems on groundwater, and to establish new standards for wastewater management planning. Under these rules, waste water management plans are organized and managed at the County-level. Counties then work with municipal planning authorities to update their wastewater management plans as necessary or as requested.

Bi-County / Inter-Governmental Regional Planning Effort - Joint Land Use Program (JLUS)

In 1985, Congress authorized the Department of Defense (DOD) to make community planning assistance grants *Title 10 U.S.C. Section 2391* to state and local government to help better understand and incorporate the military based technical data into local planning programs. In 2005 the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) decided to merge the McGuire-Lakehurst-Fort Dix installation into the first joint base in New Jersey. BRAC cited the lack of conflicting land uses adjacent to the base for its current and future mission as a critical factor it its final decision.

To better coordinate the mission of Joint Base M-D-L with its neighbors, the DOD awarded Ocean County a grant to coordinate a process known as the **Joint Land Use Program (JLUS).** The Office of Economic Adjustment manages the JLUS program.

The **JLUS** was a cooperative land use planning effort between affected local government and the military installation. The recommendations present a rationale and justification, and provide a policy framework to support adoption and implementation of compatible development measures designed to prevent urban encroachment; safeguard the military mission; and protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

As detailed on the Ocean County Department of Planning website, in early 2021 the Department of Defense, Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation awarded Ocean County a Military Installation Sustainability grant of up to $450,000. Ocean County once again agreed to sponsor a study in partnership with Burlington County. The funding will be dedicated to professional consulting services to conduct a Compatible Use Study (RCUS), formerly known as a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS), that builds upon the findings and implementation actions of the 2009 JLUS, and analyzes current compatibility and resilience issues.

The website goes on to further explain that the RCUS will focus on 7 primary objectives including ongoing efforts to address compatible land use measures surround the base. Those 7 objectives are as follows:

- Analysis of current and future development patterns and land use compatibility around the base,
- Analysis of current air and ground noise, including Compatible Zones, Accident Potential Zones for fixed and rotary wing operations,
- Recommendations on continuing and improving intergovernmental communication,
- Recommendations on local ordinance changes following an analysis of military and community needs,
- Analysis of natural and man-made hazard mitigation around the Joint Base, especially regarding wildfires and drought,
- Recommendations on energy compatibility and resilience, including renewable energy planning,

- Analysis of resiliency opportunities to minimize the potential for energy interruptions and mitigate their impact.

More information can be found at the following:

https://www.planning.co.ocean.nj.us/frmCEMilitary

As a result of these cooperative planning efforts between the Counties and Joint Base M-D-L, the County places a high priority on preserving lands within five (5) miles of the facility's boundary. The County fully appreciates and agrees that continuing to preserve the land adjacent to the base is important to the DOD and the success of the mission of the Joint Base. Land preservation and future growth must carefully consider the needs of the base and likewise, the base must be sensitive to the needs of the communities it impacts. Chapter II includes a map shows the extent of Burlington County's "Military Base Buffer Overlay."

Municipal Master Plan and Zoning – Overview

Municipalities in Burlington County outside the jurisdiction of the NJPC have primary jurisdiction on land use decisions within their boundaries. They have several land use tools available to them that are "agriculture-friendly", as discussed in the NJDA Smart Growth Plan.

The following descriptions of agriculture-friendly planning techniques have been excerpted from the NJDA Smart Growth Plan:

Clustering: Clustering is a development design technique that concentrates buildings on a portion of land to allow the remainder to be preserved for agriculture, recreation, or environmental purposes. Clustering is most effective when applied regionally as a component of a larger, overarching land use planning strategy, but the technique can be effectively applied on a single parcel of land. When administered correctly, as an application of consistent land-use policy, clustering conserves land, cuts infrastructure costs, maintains landowner equity, and reduces the cost of government services. It is also important for a municipality to require a developer to include state RTF Act language in the deeds to the developed portion of a cluster project and ensure that the homeowners' association regulations specifically do not prohibit farming activities on the remaining parcel when the remainder is specifically set aside for agricultural preservation.

Recent updates (2013) to the clustering provisions within the MLUL have provided municipalities with greater authority to include both contiguous and non-contiguous clustering within their zoning ordinances. As of the date of this plan North Hanover Township is reviewing a Major Site Plan application in which the applicant is seeking to cluster approximately 37 homes on 50 acres of a 103 acre parcel. The remaining 53 acres is proposed to be deed restricted to agricultural uses.

Clustering can be implemented on a voluntary or mandatory basis. Typically, in voluntary situations, strong incentives are provided to encourage the use of clustering as opposed to existing conventional zoning. Clustering in agricultural areas should be accompanied by land use policy that ensures that the most productive farmland is preserved while accommodating development on marginal land.

Most successful clustering schemes involving lots smaller than ½ acre use alternative wastewater treatment systems. Towns in New Jersey and across the country are using a variety of wastewater technologies that provide treatment for small-scale communities ranging from 10 units to several hundred. These systems can be utilized to enable compact growth patterns and can improve water quality in areas where septic systems are

failing. These systems produce clean water at the point of discharge that can replenish critical groundwater resources or can provide effluent for irrigation, municipal street cleaning and other suitable uses.

When these systems are used to cluster development on marginal lands, with the majority of the remaining land set aside with an easement restricting development, hundreds of acres of farmland can be preserved at no cost to the public. Having pre-approved designs for these "stand-alone" wastewater treatment systems can reduce the cost and limit the number of hookups. The use of innovative infrastructure systems gives municipalities and counties the ability to plan for the future development of their community according to their own vision. More than 30 of these systems have been serving several New Jersey communities for a number of years and are functioning well.

Density Transfer: New Jersey amended its Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) in 1996 to encourage flexibility regarding density, intensity of land use and design. Density transfer techniques can be used to engage landowners in a specific region of a municipality to change traditional land use patterns. For example, the development potential from four farms can be transferred to one farm, allowing for the accommodation of growth and the permanent protection of four out of five farms.

Lot Size Averaging: Lot size averaging is a simple method to permit flexibility in lot size on a parcel of land. This is an effective technique for smaller parcels (10-20 acres) that are proposed for subdivision where flexibility in lot size may help to preserve resources. The overall density remains the same. Only the lot sizes vary.

TDR: TDR programs can protect farmland by shifting development from agricultural areas to areas targeted for growth. TDR is the clustering of development, a tool that can be implemented in a portion of a township, township-wide or regionally. TDR allows landowners to transfer the right to develop from one parcel of land – called a sending area, the area to be preserved – to a different parcel of land – called a receiving area, the area to accommodate growth.

Burlington County's experience to date with TDR has been limited to Chesterfield and Lumberton Townships. An overview of these programs was detailed in Chapter II.

The County assisted these municipalities by providing the planning support for TDR planning and implementation. For example, former County FPP Coordinator Susan Craft, and other staff assisted the Chesterfield Township Planning Board envision a new master plan and strategy for implementing a TDR Program. To overcome a major hurdle in the receiving area, the County assisted by playing a role in negotiating a tie into the sewerage treatment plant at that Albert C. Wagner Correctional Institution, operated by the State of New Jersey. To offset the cost for expansion of the institution's treatment plant to accommodate the planned development, the State and the County assisted by arranging for a low-interest loan from the State to cover that cost. The plan called for a 560-acre receiving area called Old York Village. The receiving area calls for over twelve hundred attached and detached housing options including a mixed use village center.

The use of all of the above planning techniques should be carefully considered by municipalities in Burlington County based on their individual situations. Planning techniques should **complement** public investment in farmland preservation, not replace it. If used in conjunction with the County's Farmland Preservation Program, these planning techniques are likely to assist reaching the preservation goals stated further in this Plan without a great amount of public financial resources.

The CADB should monitor local zoning and SDRP mapping changes and review their impact on the County's ADA and the ATL and adjust both accordingly over time. If farmland is to be preserved by any of the above zoning techniques, the CADB is open to discussing the merits of holding and monitoring the resulting easements. The CADB recommends that the terms of the resulting easements be substantially similar to the template SADC approved DOE.

Strict large lot zoning techniques may reduce the number of homes that can be built, but it also spreads out those homes in such a way that consumes more land, with none of the remaining land useable for farming, forestry or recreation. Burlington County does not view large lot zoning, in of itself, as a zoning technique that is effective in preserving agriculture while respecting the equity of the landowner. As stated earlier in this Chapter, **Burlington County views the maintenance of equity as an underlying tenet of this Plan and a guiding principle of its farmland preservation program.**

Individual Municipal Master Plan and Zoning profiles for local jurisdictions relevant to this Plan should be accessed through their respective municipal websites**.**

For further information, please reference Part 5.3 of the *Current Industry Status and Trends* Report (December 2004). This section provides in depth detail on land use plans that impact agricultural practices and viability in Burlington County, with a specific focus on the County's Farm Belt.

Chapter IX of this Plan includes specific strategies related to the relationship between a sustainable agricultural industry and land use decisions in Burlington County. These strategies are related to Goal #3 (Promotion and Protection of the Right to Farm) and Goal #4 (Coordination of Land Use Planning Activities)

Chapter VIII
Stewardship

This section of the Plan has two primary features. First, this section contains discussion on the County's efforts to ensure that the investment made in farmland preservation is maintained by proper monitoring and if necessary, enforcement of the deed-restrictions. This includes County policies on post-preservation requests allowed for through the language contained in the deed restrictions. Second, this section discusses the relationship between the agricultural industry and the stewardship of natural resources.

Stewardship of Public Investment in Preserved Farmland

Monitoring of Preserved Farms

To ensure ongoing and future support for the County's FPP it is essential that the public investment is taken seriously by the owners of preserved farmland. The monitoring process is a vital tool that will help ensure the integrity, support and effectiveness of the FPP itself.

The County is obligated to monitor all county-preserved farms annually. The SADC is responsible for monitoring state held easements. The process for monitoring involves a notice sent to the preserved farm landowners informing them of the County's need to visit the farm to verify compliance with the terms of the DOE. More importantly, the monitoring notification letter is intended to set the tone for cooperation between the County and the landowner. The County requests, but does not require, the presence of the landowner during this site visit. The ability to meet with the landowners in a relatively informal setting allows for honest discussions regarding the FPP and allows County staff to hear constructive criticisms and recommendations.

The County has established the practice of conducting these monitoring visits between the months of January and April. This approach was directed at those directly involved in farming, since they are more likely to have free time at this time of the year to meet with County staff. In addition, the lack of standing crops in the fields and brush in forested areas allows for a more thorough evaluation of the land.

This approach to monitoring has allowed for greater time spent with the landowners and undoubtedly serves a positive role in fostering beneficial relationships between the County and the landowners.

Another benefit, as the result of increased time spent with landowners, is the ability to annually review the terms of the DOE and ensure that some of the uncertainties and misconceptions are discussed. For example many landowners questions whether or not the DOE requires that the land actually be farmed. At this time, County staff is able to explain that the DOE requires that the land be available for farming, and that in the case of agricultural lands going fallow, we require that landowners have the fields mowed at least once per year. This will prevent the loss of tillable lands to woody vegetation and/or conversion back to a natural wetlands state.

Additionally, time spent with landowners during the monitoring process allows for a one-on-one explanation of various regulations and policies that impact preserved farm owners, especially new regulations and policies that have been adopted since the time when the farm was preserved. For example, over the last decade or more there has been

ongoing discussion and proposed rule development by the SADC as it relates to Soil Protection Standards on preserved farms. The proposed rules have changed significantly over time and are rather complex. Time spent with landowners explaining the process and collecting feedback will prove invaluable as the rules move forward toward adoption.

A major misconception of the program deals with the physical appearance of farms and their respective buildings. In the past, the County has received numerous inquiries from the public and agricultural community related to abandoned or otherwise unsightly buildings on preserved farms. The monitoring process allows staff to clearly explain to the landowners and public alike that the terms of the DOE do not mention, and therefore do not require, the landowner to maintain the buildings in any particular state or condition.

From time to time there have been instances in which County staff has identified issues on preserved farms that are not in compliance with the DOE. Many of the issues on non-compliant farms are related to fallow fields. The County views fallow fields as lands available for agricultural production that no cropping or, at a minimum, mowing has occurred within the past year. These farms are therefore subject to successional growth in the form of woody vegetation that once established, is difficult to remove. Most of these situations are resolved by bringing the issue to the attention of the landowner. Those issues that are not resolved within a reasonable time frame are presented to the CADB for a recommendation on how to proceed. Other monitoring issues encountered include erosion issues, trash/debris issues and on a few occasions non-agricultural use and encroachment issues.

Most preserved farms are subject to a DOE requirement that farms must have a farm conservation plan prepared for their farms. This plan usually helps alleviate common issues on farms, especially erosion issues. The farming industry itself realizes the long-term economic benefits of retaining as much topsoil as possible on all farms. Therefore, erosion problems identified during the monitoring process usually do not reflect ongoing negligence on behalf of the farmer. County staff is able to inform the landowner, or tenant farmer, of assistance that can be provided free of charge by the local SCD and the USDA NRCS. These recommendations can be put together in the form of a farm conservation plan which can then be implemented by the farmer or landowner to address the erosions issues. In some instances, County staff has been able to educate landowners that have no involvement in the farming operation as to the benefits of a farm conservation plan. The landowner is then able to develop a farm conservation plan for their land and make those recommendations contained within a requirement for the lease of their land.

In situations where there is an unapproved, non-agricultural use identified on a preserved farm, FPP staff will typically discuss the matter with the landowner and try to solve the issue in a non-confrontational, informal manner. If this issue is not able to be resolved in this manner, FPP Staff present the issue to the CADB, which provides a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The County often seeks the guidance from the SADC as a significant portion of preserved farms in Burlington County are subject not only to the rights of the County, but also the SADC.

The monitoring process is intended to promote cooperation, exchange of ideas and mutual respect between the easement holder (the County and/or the SADC) and the landowner. This approach is vital to strengthening the relationship between the landowners and the County while protecting the public investment in the program. This in turn leads toward promotion of the program within the agricultural community itself and the subsequent preservation of additional farms.

Farmland Preservation Signs

Perhaps one of the most successful ways to advertise the public investment made in the FPP is to visually indicate which farms have been preserved through the program. The SADC and Burlington County have offered preserved farm landowners the opportunity to display farmland preservation signs on their property. Though the State and County signs differ in appearance, the message conveys the same concept. A cooperative public investment has been made to keep these lands in agricultural use.

Burlington County offers these signs to the landowners at no fee and the County even offers to install the signs at the locations chosen by the landowner. In most instances landowners have chosen to have the signs placed in a highly visible location along a road with a generally broad view of the entire farm. In a number of instances, those farmers that have farm markets have chosen to display their preservation signs on, or immediately adjacent to their farm market.

Currently, owners of 114 farms have chosen to display the Burlington County FPP sign that indicates the total acreage of the farm and the order in which it was preserved. Approximately 20 preserved farms in Burlington County have chosen the larger, wooden sided sign provided by the SADC.

The willingness of so many Burlington County preserved farm owners to display these signs seems to indicate a sense of pride on behalf of the owners to have enrolled their farm in the program. The presence of the signs also seems to indicate a sense of support for the continuation of the program on behalf of these owners as an advertisement to other farm owners.

In the eyes of the public, there are undoubtedly untold benefits of the presence of these signs. There has definitely been a strong push on behalf of the citizens of NJ to fund open space programs such as farmland preservation in an effort to retain green, open spaces and help stop the spread of urban sprawl. As one drives past any one of these 134 farms that have agreed to have farmland preservation signs installed, they can rest assured that these lands will remain in agriculture in perpetuity.

Burlington County continues to receive requests from preserved farm owners to have more of these signs installed. Though there are some who specifically choose not to advertise their lands as preserved, for a number of reasons, we believe that there will be a day when the vast majority of preserved farms in Burlington County will have these signs on display.

Burlington County Farm Stewardship Award

In 2006 the CADB moved to establish a yearly award to recognize a farmer that owns and/or operates a preserved Burlington County farm with a specific commitment to proper stewardship and management. FPP staff, through the yearly monitoring process, will nominate farmers that demonstrate a commitment to properly maintaining fields, ditches, and agricultural buildings. The farmer must have adopted and implemented a farm conservation plan. The CADB makes the final decision on the award recipient. The farmer receiving the award will receive a plaque recognizing their efforts at a CADB and/or County Commissioner public meeting. Since 2007 the County has presented this award each year to a different landowner. In an effort to achieve greater recognition and appreciation for those who exemplify and prioritize the stewardship of their farms, the County is considering options to present this annual award during the annual Farm Fair held at the Burlington County Fairgrounds.

Post-Closing Decisions

Post-closing decisions are those actions taken on a preserved farm that require the approval and/or guidance of the CADB and easement holders. These actions were discussed in Section II.

In many instances, the preserved farms have certain vested rights built into the conditions of the deed restrictions. The process by which these actions are taken usually starts with a request made by the landowner. The landowner can consult with staff in order to understand what his or her options may or may not be and review their needs for the action. All of the actions have a standard request form to be filled out by the landowner. To reduce the paperwork and effort to exercise these rights, Burlington County defers to the standard application as provided by the SADC. FPP staff members spend considerable time with landowners of preserved farmland in order to better understand the request being made in order to efficiently prepare a staff recommendation to the CADB.

Leasing of Preserved Farmland

Another benefit of the yearly monitoring process is that County staff is afforded the opportunity to meet with landowners and listen to their thoughts on the current status of agriculture in NJ. Burlington County preserved farmland owners are comprised of both owner/operators and those that own the land and simply lease it to other local farmers.

A significant portion of farmland in the County is not owner-operated and is instead leased to other farm operations. According to the University Of Lincoln Case Study report of Burlington County (Esseks, 2002) approximately 35 percent of the farmland in Burlington County is under an agricultural lease. Many of the largest farm operations in the County rely on the ability to lease additional lands to supplement the land they own. According to many of these farmers, leasing land offers a more feasible economic alternative relative to owning all of the land they would choose to farm. In most cases, land values are so high as to render their purchase simply for agricultural production economically prohibitive. For this very reason, County farmers are able to obtain an increased level in security for their long-term goals of farming. Farmers that lease land currently enrolled in the FPP do not have to worry about losing that land to non-agricultural development. They still have to compete with current agricultural economic market forces that drive up lease values, but the land will ultimately remain in some form of agricultural production.

Leasing of County-Owned Preserved Farmland / Open-Space Property

The Board of County Commissioners owns a significant amount of acreage that can be used for agricultural production. These lands have been acquired by the County for a number of reasons including development of the County park system or indefinite ownership for agricultural use. The CADB and Board of County Commissioners have decided that whenever possible these farms shall be available for farm leases until such time that the County either develops these into a park or resells them at auction. By leasing these lands the County benefits in two major ways: The lands help support the agricultural industry by allowing farmers to lease the land and the County gains an economic return. The private lease and management of these lands also results in less resource devotion by the County for the maintenance of these lands.

Rural Microenterprise Permit Policy

As explained in Chapter II, this permit is an opportunity that allows certain owners of preserved farms to have new, small-scale, non-agricultural uses developed on preserved farms. These opportunities are fairly limited in scope and scale as the language contained in the authorizing legislation is very narrow. These permits are restricted to owners of preserved farms that do not have designated Exception Areas. The SADC retains the primary jurisdiction of issuing these permits.

Specific detail can be found at the following:

https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/documents/farmpreserve/postpres/Rural%20Microenterprise%20Application.pdf

Stewardship of Natural Resources on Farmland

Agricultural and Natural Resources Agencies Available to Landowners

Success of stewardship of farmland relies upon the commitment of the landowner to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the natural resources of the farm. This commitment is best achieved when landowners are well-educated and informed of the natural resources of the farm and how to best manage them. It is important to note that many landowners have achieved this knowledge through their own experiences and research and are often more aware of the issues affecting their parcel of land than an outside agency may be. However, there are others that, through voluntary and cooperative efforts with these outside agencies, can achieve an even better understanding of the resources of their farm and the options of how to best manage them.

Burlington County farmland owners have been best served by three primary governmental agencies for the wise use and management of the natural resources of their farm.

Burlington County Soil Conservation District (SCD)

SCDs were created as a result of the Dust Bowl in the 1930's when President Franklin D. Roosevelt, signed the Soil Conservation Act of 1935. From that time on, Soil Conservation Districts have been led by locally elected Boards of officials and farmers who have been charged with assisting farmers and the public, in the wise use of the natural resources of their lands. Originally, SCDs focused on soil erosion prevention assistance to farmers, but have since added water conservation and other natural resource issues to their overall mission.

Farmers and other landowners may make a request to the Burlington County SCD through a Request for Assistance form in which the landowner is requesting that the SCD with the cooperation of the USDA NRCS, provide education and technical assistance for the continued management of the natural resources on the landowners property. Once this request is approved the farmer is then considered to be a "cooperator" with the SCD and the SCD will then pass the request onto the NRCS for further action.

The Burlington CADB maintains an ex-officio position for one of the SCD Board of Directors members in order to facilitate increased communication with the agricultural agencies of the County.

The Burlington County SCD is located at:

1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Road
Columbus, NJ 08022
Tel. 609-267-7410 • Fax 609-267-3347
District Director – Robert Reitmeyer
https://www.bscd.org/

U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The NRCS is a federal government agency that provides technical assistance to landowners via requests made through the local SCDs. NRCS representatives will meet with landowners in an effort to identify natural resource concerns on the property and then work with the landowner to establish a plan directed to address the concern or even enhance the natural resource in question. Most often this is achieved through the creation of a farm conservation plan.

As stated in the USDA NRCS Conservation Planning Fact Sheet (January, 2018):

'NRCS's high quality conservation plans give you, as a land manager, step-by-step recommendations to improve wildlife habitat, pest management, soil health, and yields while reducing energy and input costs. The conservation plan integrates management of the natural resources you rely on with your business objectives. The information gathered in the planning process will help to enhance your decision-making process and provide long-term results benefitting your land and your bottom line.'

The Burlington County NRCS office can be reached at the Burlington County SCD office building:

1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Road
Columbus, NJ 08022
Tel. 609-267-1639
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/nj/home/
District Conservationist – Nicole Ciccaglione

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Burlington County

As stated on the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Website the Mission of the Rutgers Cooperative Extension is:

'To enhance the vitality, health, sustainability, and overall quality of life in New Jersey by developing and delivering practical, effective solutions to current and emerging challenges relating to agriculture; fisheries; food; natural resources; the environment; public health; as well as economic, community, and youth development.'

Rutgers Extension Agents of Burlington County are often the first line of communication for farmers that are looking for assistance in a wide range of areas or if the general public has concerns relating to an agricultural issue. The broad based knowledge of the Rutgers Extension Agents allows them to deal with the issue directly or to put those making the request in contact with the appropriate agency.

The Burlington CADB maintains an ex-officio positions for one local Rutgers Extension Agent in order to facilitate increased communication with the agricultural agencies of the County.

The Burlington County Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office can be reached at the following:

#2 Academy Drive
Westampton, NJ 08060
Tel. 609-265-5050
https://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/quickinfo.php?Burlington
County Agent / CADB representative – Bill Bamka

Natural Resource Conservation and Protection Programs

No equation for agricultural industry viability is complete without proper attention to natural resource conservation. Environmental sustainability is a two-way street. Farmers will require continued access to adequate natural resources (i.e., land, quality soils and water) in order to engage in successful farming. Continued population growth and ensuing development demand will continue to create significant competition for limited resources. However, farmers also need to remain good stewards, protecting and using environmental and natural resources responsibly through adoption of sound soil and water conservation practices, as well as energy conservation, pollution abatement, and mitigation strategies.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing the County's FPP is the role the easement holder plays in assuring the conservation of the natural resources on the preserved farmland and to what extent the easement holder can assure this conservation. As Burlington County continues to shift focus from acquisitions to a monitoring and agricultural support and development role, there is a need to ensure that these lands remain active and productive. The program has faced criticism in the past regarding the way some people perceive how certain preserved farms have been "taken care of." As discussed earlier Burlington County, and any easement holder for that matter, has no role in enforcing the physical appearance, i.e. barns, homes, scenic venues, in their aesthetic characteristics. However, provision #7 of the DOE clearly states that…

> "*No activity shall be permitted on the Premises that would be detrimental to drainage, flood control, water conservation, erosion control, or soil conservation, nor shall any other activity be permitted which would be detrimental to the continued agricultural use of the Premises…*"

It is this provision specifically that gives the easement holder the discretion to consider and evaluate the current status of these natural resources (water & soil) during the annual monitoring events. As discussed previously, FPP staff has encountered numerous erosion-related issues during the monitoring process. In most cases where erosion concerns have been identified, the landowner or tenant farmer has been put in contact with the local NRCS office so that the issue could be addressed through a farm conservation plan.

SADC Soil and Water Conservation Cost-Share Program

A significant post-closing benefit of enrolling a farm into a FPP (traditional compensated easement, TDR preservation, Term Easement program, or PDC severance) is qualifying

for NJ Soil and Water Conservation Cost-Share funding. This funding allows farmland owners / operators to apply for cost-share funding for projects on their lands that would lead to the ultimate conservation of water and or soil resources on their farm. Eligible projects can include surface and subsurface drainage improvements, installation of high efficiency irrigation systems, construction of irrigation ponds, and installation of a variety of erosion control practices, among others. Funding for this program is based on the amount of acreage that the landowner has preserved whether permanently or for a specified term of 8 or 16 years. Ultimately, if approved by the local SCD, State Soil Conservation Committee and the SADC, landowners will be reimbursed for up to 50 percent of the estimated cost of the project. This reimbursement includes material and labor costs and allows farmers who choose to perform the work themselves contribute their time as part of their 50 percent cost-share requirement.

Burlington County farmers have been very successful in qualifying for this funding. This is just one of many indicators that the County plans to use for tracking progress in these matters as these projects make for more efficient and productive farms while properly managing the natural resources on-site.

Federal and Non-Profit Conservation Programs

Farmers and farmland owners alike have opportunities to enroll their lands or portions of their land into various Natural Resource Protection Programs. These programs typically target specific natural resources on lands, farms in this case, in order to obtain specific Natural Resource goals. For example, a non-profit organization such as Ducks Unlimited, offers a number of programs and or assistance to landowners with water resources on their farm. The goal of these programs or assistance focuses on the ultimate goal of rehabilitating of protecting habitat for waterfowl. The USDA, though the Farm Bill, offers a host of Programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA), and the Conservation Stewardship Program. The USDA also offers free technical assistance for general conservation goals such as field drainage and grading. In most cases these programs operate independently of the FPP and function without the oversight of the easement holder. In most cases the agricultural programs do not interfere with the terms of the DOE and, in fact, help enhance those items addressed in provision #7 of the DOE.

These programs are included in the 2018 Farm Bill. Specific information on each can be found at the following:

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/

There has been significant discussion among CADB and SADC staff regarding the goals and practices contained within some of these previously mentioned programs. Some allowable practices within these programs could be considered violations of the terms of the DOE. It is believed by many that any program endorsed by the USDA must be acceptable to the farmland preservation program, but this may not be the case. Any consistencies between programs and DOEs should be clarified by CADBs and the SADC.

According to NRCS representatives the following table summarizes those USDA program contracts approved and acreages enrolled in Burlington County in 2022.

Table 18
USDA Programs
Approved Contracts / Acreage Enrolled (2022)

	Status	Contracts Obligated	Contracted Acres	Obligation Amount
AMA	Active	1	65	$89,000.00
EQIP	Active	17	1,364	$513,000.00
CSP	Renewal	2	511	$90,400.00
CSP	Classic	4	405	$77,600.00

Waste Management Planning

Farm-generated waste poses a concern for farming in Burlington County especially as one notes the increase in nursery operations on County farms. Nursery operations, especially those with a significant portion dedicated to greenhouse production generate significant amounts of solid waste in the form of temporary polypropylene hoop-house covers. These hoop-houses are typically covered in the fall and the plastic is typically removed the following April. Various other types of plastic waste is also generated in the form of plastic nursery containers, irrigation drip tape and mulch film.

At Allied Recycling in Springfield Twp., non-refillable, high-density polyethylene #2 (HDPE #2) containers used by agricultural professionals and commercial applicators are accepted for disposal. Containers must be no larger than 55 gallons and properly rinsed. Nursery pots must also be properly rinsed. The program is open to anyone who holds a N.J. Department of Environmental Protection pesticide license and to state, county, and municipal government agencies.

Currently the NJ Department of Agriculture assists farm operations in meeting New Jersey's various mandatory recycling regulations. Details on the various recycling programs and assistance can be found at the following:

https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/nrc/recycling.html

Other typical local farm operations such as grain, hay, or equine tend to generate only minimal amounts of solid waste in relation to the size of the operation. During preserved farm monitoring inspections it has been observed that many farm operations use either typical residential curb-side pick up or small on-site dumpsters for solid waste removal.

Many farms throughout the State contain old farm dumps which generally consist of old farm equipment and tires piled along a wood-line of the property. Burlington County farms are no different. Due to a recent rise in scrap metal prices, County staff have observed a significant number of landowners who have now chosen to remove the old metal debris and sell this waste at local scrap yards. It has been represented to County staff by a number of landowners that this increase in revenue has now made the process of recycling the scrap metal a worthwhile endeavor for economic reasons.

Tires have been historically identified as a problem due to their inability to degrade over time and their ability to retain pools of water which harbor mosquitoes. For these reasons

Burlington County has offered an annual Tire Amnesty Program for Burlington County farmers. This Amnesty Program allows anyone that can verify their status as a Burlington County farmer the ability to dispose of old tires at the County Resource Recovery Complex in Mansfield Township. The County has chosen to offer this amnesty period during the months of March and April, prior to the busy spring season for most of our farmers. This program has been a true success for the County, farmers, and the environment and results in thousands of tires each year being disposed of in a proper manner. In recent years the federal funding that supported this program has declined. In addition, the previous success of this program has reduced the number of tires on farms thus reducing the overall demand. County staff will continue to utilize this Tire Amnesty Program as funding is available.

Animal Waste Management

The Federal Clean Water Act of 1972 (CWA) identifies concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) as a "point source" of pollution, which are prohibited from being discharged in the nation's waterways without a permit. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has vested implementation of the CWA with the State of NJ, both within the DEP (related to CAFOs) and the NJDA in relation to animal feeding operations (AFOs) as a strategy to prevent "non-point" pollution. In 2003, the DEP adopted ruled to issue CAFO permits through the New Jersey Pollution Elimination System regulation program.

Additional information can be found at the following:

https://www.nj.gov/dep/dwq/cafo.htm

Water Resources and Management

Chapter IV (Agricultural Land Base) provides an overview of water resources and Burlington County's Water Allocation Credit Transfer Program.

Energy Conservation Planning

The 2008 Plan supported a farmer's ability to generate energy from renewable sources to meet the needs of their own commercial farming unit along with the on-farm residential uses whether a farm is preserved or not. Such environmentally-sound management practices should be encouraged. The CADB finds it reasonable for farmers to generate a limited amount of energy in excess of their operational demands and sell it to on the private market. This should be allowed so that farmers can recoup the upfront capital investment and offset the on-going maintenance and upkeep of structures and equipment required to facilitate their transition to renewable energy.

To that end the SADC developed regulations that allow preserved farm landowners the ability to construct solar energy generation facilities on their land. The regulations allow for preserved farm owners to install a system designed to supply up to 110% of their previous year's energy demand, or to install a system that occupies up to 1% of the preserved land area. Since its inception, over 10 solar energy systems have been installed on preserved farms in Burlington County. Furthermore, the SADC incorporated new regulations within the NJ Right to Farm Act that detail protections afforded to qualifying farms for the installation of solar energy generating facilities on farms.

Soil Protection Standards

As a result of a NJ Supreme Court decision in the *State of New Jersey v. Quaker Valley Farms, LLC* , the SADC has contemplated how best to balance various sections of the farmland preservation DOE that may be in contradiction of each other. Specifically, provisions within the DOE that allow for the construction of agricultural buildings and other agricultural improvements that disturb the land could be in conflict with the provisions that require 'no activities that are detrimental to soil and water conservation to be conducted.' Practices that result in the increase of impervious coverage or that require significant amounts of land grading could lead to an overall loss of soil productivity in these areas.

The SADC has spent considerable time consulting with partner agencies, landowners, and other agricultural interest groups in an attempt to draft regulations that would offer clear direction and limits to preserved farm owners who are contemplating these types of improvements on their farms. These directions and limits are intended to balance the varying objectives of the DOE.

To date these regulations have not been adopted, but are available in draft form at the following:

https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/documents/SADC%20Meetings/SPS%20draft%20rules%206.23.22.pdf

Mitigation and Practice Implementations Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change

It has been widely recognized among the general public, the scientific community, and the farming community that the climate which impacts our farms changes from year to year and over the course of extended periods of time. These changes, whether they are changes in temperature, changes in precipitation or changes in the overall length of the growing season, result in various challenges to farm operations. Farm owners are now increasingly afforded opportunities to address these challenges through the installation of various technologies and practices. These practices and technologies can be used to benefit their individual operations and / or to contribute towards the mitigation of climate change on a broader scale.

Technologies aimed at addressing the impacts of climate change will evolve over time. It seems clear at this point in time that there will be continued and expanded opportunities for farm owners and operators to voluntarily implement these technologies. It is imperative that those with influence regarding the underlying legislation in our Farmland Preservation Program, and those that influence the interpretation of those laws and regulations, work to ensure that these technologies and practices are found to be consistent with the rules and objectives of the FPP moving forward.

The USDA NRCS is taking the lead in assisting farm owners with education and the implementation of such technologies and practices.

As detailed in the USDA NRCS website:

'Climate change threatens agricultural production, forest resources and rural economies. NRCS offers a variety of programs, services, resources and tools to help farmers, ranchers, forest landowners and partners pursue voluntary conservation efforts to deliver climate solutions across the nation's working lands. Learn more

about NRCS Climate-Smart Mitigation Activities, voluntary conservation practices and enhancements that can support climate change mitigation by reducing greenhouse gas emissions or increasing carbon sequestration.'

Chapter IX includes specific strategies related to the stewardship of preserved farmland and the impacts of climate change. These strategies are related to Goals #2 & #8.

Chapter IX
Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Program (2023-2032): Goals, Strategies and Indicators

This section of the Plan is intended to provide clear goals and objectives for the County's FPP over the next 10 years. For each of the goals contained in this section, strategies and indicators are provided in an effort to effectively attain the articulated goals and provide measurable documentation of anticipated attainment.

Strategies are specific means of achieving the goal. Indicators are measurements that enable monitoring of progress made toward achievement of the goal. Potential indicators or data that could be recorded and monitored are offered for consideration. It should be expected that some of these strategies will serve to further more than one goal, but such strategies are listed only once under the goal that will be most advanced by its implementation.

The absence of a specific strategy recommended by the Technical Report should not be construed as a lack of desire for the County to implement said strategy.

The goals described in this chapter are reflective of the County's desire to continue its focus on achievement of preservation goals while simultaneously developing formal stewardship and agricultural viability programming. As with the onset of the acquisition program, the County has chosen to start small and will prioritize its efforts in critical areas where it can realize the greatest benefits to the agricultural community and the public at large.

In the early 1980's, in the formative stages of the State's farmland preservation programs there was much dialogue in regard to the amount of land needed to sustain the agricultural industry in New Jersey. The leaders of the farmland preservation movement recognized that action could not be delayed pending consensus on this issue and the "critical mass" was never defined. In like manner, the final picture of **'farm stewardship'** and **'agricultural viability'** will continue to be elusive until strategies begin to be implemented. Once again, it is imperative that steps be taken now to ensure that we do not lose the next generation of farmers while we work towards clearer definitions of farm stewardship and agricultural viability. It is this next generation of farmers who will be the stewards of the preserved farmland resource and who will shape the definition of agricultural viability into the 21st century.

The strategies listed below are believed to be implementable with the resources available to the County at this time. If County, State, Federal, or Non-Profit resources for implementation of strategies not listed in this Plan are made available after the adoption of this Plan, the CADB will advise the Board of County Commissioners of the same. If determined to be viable, the strategy will be implemented.

Goals, Strategies, and Indicators

The Mission Statement of the Burlington County FPP shall continue to be:

The Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program exists to advance the quality of life in Burlington County by preserving a permanent agricultural land base and by maintaining a regulatory environment that supports a viable agricultural industry.

This Mission Statement shall guide the Board of County Commissioners and the CADB in all future decisions related to public investment in farmland and agricultural economic development.

In conjunction with a mission, the FPP must have a clear a vision of the future conditions it aspires to attain. As such, the **"Vision Statement"** of the Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program continues to be:

The Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program envisions a future in which a strong and dynamic agricultural industry persists and contributes to a vigorous local economy and an enhanced quality of life for all Burlington County residents.

The mission and vision of the Burlington County FPP will be fully realized by embracing eight (8) specific goals. These goals are:

Goal #1: Preservation of an Additional 10,000 Acres

Burlington County continues to view the maintenance of landowner equity as a fundamental principle that must be foremost in consideration while implementing the following strategies.

1.1 Acquisition Strategies

A. Preserve an additional **10,000 acres**.

B. Employ the County PIG Program, as the primary source of State funding, relying on the four "Project Areas" where preservation tools can be used most effectively as discussed in detail further in this Chapter.

C. Recommend that the SADC take the necessary steps to adopt a formula value to be used to establish easement values throughout the state. The use of a formula will help maintain a base value and likely result in additional applications. The use of a formula value within the Pinelands Region has proven very successful.

D. Expand on partnerships with non-profits that may choose to pursue preservation of farms that do not lie within Project Areas, but otherwise meet the County's ATL criteria.

E. Adopt policies for the limited approval of "urban farms."

F. Reconsider utilizing the Fee-Simple option to acquire farmland in limited, emergency situations.

G. Deny County preservation funds to any applicant (municipal or nonprofit) that does not uphold the rights in, and requirements of, the New Jersey RTF Act.

H. Continue to provide waiver of local cost-share requirements for Pinelands Municipalities and the Resource Recovery Overlay, and when fiscally possible, the Military Buffer Overlay.

I. Support municipalities in applying for Municipal PIG for locally important projects that may not meet the County's minimum standards. Assist with applications and negotiations for individual applications, according to SADC and County policies.

J. Increase participation in SADC Direct and Fee Simple Programs by maintaining a clear understanding of SADC minimum standards and the County farms that are of specific interest to the SADC.

K. Increase administrative effectiveness by maintaining staff levels commensurate to program activity, implementing technological improvements such as a program database and website, and providing clear and concise policies related to processing applications.

L. Seek out additional funding sources if, and only if, the process and deed-restrictions are consistent with the mission, vision, and goals of this Plan.

M. Continue to promote the IPA Program, specifically longer term IPAs, and educate program applicants of potential benefits related to state and federal tax incentives.

N. Advocate for a long-term dedicated source of State funding for farmland preservation that funds SADC programs at levels equal to or greater than current levels.

Cumulative Farmland Preservation Targets (County Public Investment):

One Year Target (by the end of 2023): 500 acres; Number of Farms: 5
Five Year Target (by the end of 2027): 2,500 acres; Number of Farms: 25
Ten Year Target (by the end of 2032): 5,000 acres; Number of Farms: 50

Table 19
Estimated Costs

Project Area Name	Acres	Average Easement Price per Acre	Total Est. Project Cost	Total Est. Mun Funding*	Total Estimated County Funding	Total Estimated State Funding
North	7,000	$10,000	$70,000,000	$7,000,000	$28,000,000	$42,000,000
West	1,000	$10,000	$10,000,000	$2,000,000	$2,000,000	$6,000,000
East	1,000	$5,000	$5,000,000	$0	$1,500,000	$3,500,000
South	1,000	$5,000	$5,000,000	$0	$1,500,000	$3,500,000

* Municipal Funding Projections based on 10 percent Local Cost-Share in the North PA, 20 percent in the West, and zero (0) percent in the East and South

Table 20
Targeted Farm Totals

Total Acreage	Total Est. Cost of Targeted Farm Easement Purchase	Total Est. Municipal Funding	Total Estimated County Funding	Total Estimated State Funding
10,000	$90,000,000	$9,000,000	$33,000,000	$55,000,000

INDICATORS: Acres Preserved, Acres Targeted, Public Funds Expended, Partner Funds Received, Farms owned by County, Number of IPA Transactions

Though the County currently has access to necessary resources to meet the **10,000 acre goal**, other preservation strategies should be utilized to assist in achieving these goals. The strategies include Municipal TDR / Ag-Friendly Zoning Techniques and the PDC Program. As such, the following strategies are recommended:

1.2 Strategies Specific to SADC Direct and Fee Simple Programs, Municipal TDR & Other Ag-Friendly Zoning Techniques:

A. Coordinate with the SADC Direct and Fee Simple Programs to make them aware of high-quality farms in Burlington County that are eligible for their program.

B. During the visioning, planning and development of TDR and/or other zoning ordinances are adopted that facilitate growth and preservation, work closely with local leaders to ensure that County acquisition efforts complement local initiatives.

C. Work with local programs to ensure that resulting easements are properly monitored and enforced.

D. Investigate opportunities to facilitate and stimulate private-market transaction with the Burlington County TDR Bank Board.

E. When a viable local TDR program is established, consider the TDR Program as the primary preservation tool if SADC funds for preservation are limited.

F. Assist municipalities to ensure that TDR Deed Restrictions maintain land in agriculture.

1.3 Strategies Specific to the Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) Program:

A. Investigate opportunities to facilitate private market PDC sales by working with interested buyers and sellers of PDCs.

B. Consider the PDC Program as the primary preservation tool if SADC funds for preservation are limited.

C. Petition the NJPC / PDC Bank to allow additional permanent deed restrictions that mandate active agricultural lands be available for agricultural production in the Agricultural Production and Special Agricultural Production Areas of the Pinelands.

Cumulative Preservation Targets (SADC / TDR / PDC):

One Year Target (by the end of 2023): 500 acres; Number of Farms: 5
Five Year Target: (by the end of 2027): 2,500 acres; Number of Farms: 25
Ten Year Target: (by the end of 2032): 5,000 acres; Number of Farms: 50

Table 21

Cumulative Preservation Targets (ALL PROGRAMS)

One Year Target (by the end of 2023): 1,000 acres; Number of Farms: 10
Five Year Target (by the end of 2027): 5,000 acres; Number of Farms: 50
Ten Year Target (by the end of 2032): 10,000 acres; Number of Farms: 100

SAMPLE INDICATORS: County, SADC, TDR, PDC Acres Preserved, Public Funding Investment, Private Funding Invested, Number of Municipalities with Preserved Farms, Number of Municipalities with TDR Ordinances, Farms Preserved by IPAs, Number of Municipalities with approved Planning Incentive Grants, Yearly PDC Transactions

Goal #2: Stewardship of Protected Land and Natural Resources

2.1 Strategies Related to Stewardship of Protected Farmland Land:

A. Ensure compliance with terms of deed-restrictions by yearly monitoring of all farms preserved by the County.

B. Ensure that farms preserved in fee-simple are properly managed while in County ownership and are sold at public auction as soon as possible with conditions consistent with the mission, vision, and goals contained in this Plan. Long-term public ownership of agricultural land should only be considered if such an arrangement would facilitate implementation of strategies contained in this Plan.

C. Establish strong lines of communication between County staff and owners of preserved farms.

D. Offer landowners of preserved farms a "Farmland Preservation Sign" that will signify to the public the landowners decision to preserve the farm. Install signs on all farms purchased by the County in fee-simple.

E. Make every effort to meet new owners of preserved farmland in order to establish a positive, cooperative relationship.

F. Stress with all applicants for farmland preservation the need for estate planning; not only to save on ultimate federal and state taxes but also to ensure that the land preservation investments by the State, County and municipality are going to advance the future of agriculture.

G. When requested, provide TDR townships with guidance on monitoring preserved farmland.

H. Establish procedures and documents to facilitate timely responses to landowners request for exercising RDSOs, replacement of residential structures, construction of agricultural labor units, division of premises, commercial opportunity permits, and general deed interpretation requests.

I. Develop a "model lease" for owners of preserved farmland to voluntarily use when renting land to an agricultural operator.

J. Investigate possibility of accepting improvements to farm infrastructure and increased maintenance requirements in lieu of rental payments for agricultural use of County owned property.

2.2 Strategies Related to Stewardship of Natural Resources:

A. Ensure that all preserved farms have Farm Conservation Plans approved by the NRCS.

B. Recommend that the SADC continue to increase staff resources devoted to post-acquisition efforts including the need to add staff certified in the development of Farm Conservation Plans.

C. Distribute information via brochures, pamphlets, in-person meetings with landowners (during annual monitoring visits), and/or newsletters highlighting funding programs which enhance water quality protection, wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation, renewable energy production, carbon sequestration, methane capture, etc., and when called upon, provide technical assistance to farm operators regarding storm water management, watershed protection, environmental restoration, and sustainable agriculture.

D. Promote regional solutions to drainage and other water resource issues.

E. Work with the New Jersey chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) to promote opportunities for organic production

F. Ensure that water allocation budgeting supports the needs of the agricultural community.

G. Consider additional "impervious coverage" restrictions in areas of the County where impact on agricultural viability would be minimized (for example, in the Pinelands Project Areas, in the Military Buffer, or in Airport Hazard Zones).

H. Continue to educate and update awareness of new and revised NJDEP environmental regulations as they pertain to agriculture. The CADB should engage and comment during the rule-making process, when appropriate.

I. Highlight the number of renewable energy projects implemented, and Soil and Water Conservation Cost Share Grants approved in an annual presentation to the CADB.

J. Promote stewardship efforts focused on mitigating the impacts of climate change on preserved farms. See **Goal #8** for more specifics.

SAMPLE INDICATORS: Number of farms with compliant easements, Number of farms with current Farm Conservation Plans, Number of FPP Signs Requested / Installed, Number of Farms receiving SADC Soil & Water Cost Share Grants, Number of Post-Closing Requests / Approvals, Number of renewable energy projects installed

Goal #3: Promotion & Protection of the Right to Farm (RTF)

3.1 Strategies Related to RTF Promotion:

A. Work with municipalities, NJDA, and other partners to develop RTF and other ordinances to support agricultural activities now and into the future.

B. Provide outreach to municipal officials regarding Right to Farm protections afforded by the On-Farm Direct Marketing AMP.

C. Develop alternative solutions for municipalities to consider (e.g. model ordinances for pressing local agricultural issues for example, farm markets and ag labor housing).

D. Hold regular workshops for farmers and municipal officials regarding needs and benefits of Agritourism to prevent expensive and time-consuming controversy when farms engage in such activities.

E. Create a "welcome-package" for newly elected public officials in participating municipalities in the County to ensure that they understand and appreciate their role in implementing the goals contained in this Plan.

3.2 Strategies Related to RTF Protection:

A. Participate in the development of SADC Agriculture Management Practices (AMPs) and communicate County priorities for AMP development

B. Advocate for mediation as the first step in conflict resolution.

C. Ensure that CADB decisions related to the development of SSAMP and Conflict Resolution decisions properly balance the interests of the public health and safety with the private interests of the private operator seeking the protection SSAMP decision must be made efficiently, fairly, and with the opinion of the aggrieved party thoroughly considered.

D. Meet with parties regarding potential Right to Farm matters as soon as possible in an effort to resolve issues prior to starting the mediation process or submission of a formal Right to Farm complaint.

SAMPLE INDICATORS: Number of municipalities with effective RTF ordinances, Number of Model Ag-Viability Ordinances Approved by the CADB, Number of Model Ag-Viability Ordinances Adopted by Municipalities, SSAMP Requests / Approvals, Conflict Resolution Requests / Approvals, Mediation Requests, Number of SADC AMPs developed

Goal #4: Coordination of Land Use Planning Activities

Strategies:

A. Continue to employ carefully designed TDR plans or density transfers to increase the acres of preserved farmland (at little to no cost to the public) while managing growth.

B. Assist in the development of local agricultural preservation and retention master plan elements pursuant to the MLUL that can support zoning and land development ordinances more favorable to the economic viability of agriculture.

C. Work with partners to collect or develop model ordinances for municipalities to use in amending their local ordinances to give greater support to agriculture. Guide municipalities in using and applying these model ordinances.

D. Assist the Office of EDRP in the multi-county planning process related to the Joint Base M-D-L Military Installation by expressing the goals of this Plan.

E. Include farmer representation in the decision-making and design of County recreation trails, and include provisions for parking, blocking unauthorized entry into farms, enforcement and fines including paying for site and crop damage.

F. Recommend that representative local Agricultural Advisory Committees are established to advise the municipal planning board and governing body on how to further preservation and agricultural economic development goals.

G. Ensure that future design and capacity improvements to local, County and State roads do not negatively impact drainage on farms

SAMPLE INDICATORS: Number of local TDR ordinances, Number of Farmland Preservation Elements of Local Master Plans, Number of AACs established

Goal #5: Implementation of Agricultural Economic Development Strategies

Strategies:

A. Increase public awareness of the importance of the FPP and the agricultural industry by making connections through various programs and events, such as the SJRC&D Tour des Farms and its "Farming for the Future" grant program, that connects residents and tourists to the agricultural industry.

B. Recommend that the SADC revise the Rural Microenterprise Permit policy to also allow preserved farm owners with Exception Areas to qualify for the permit.

C. Recognize the significant threat that the current white-tailed deer overpopulation has on the economic viability of most farms in the County and the State. Burlington County should adopt various strategies aimed at reducing the deer population to acceptable levels. These strategies could include permitting access to County-owned lands for hunting and assisting Hunters Helping the Hungry in order to increase the amount of deer donated to their program. These two specific strategies have been endorsed by NJ Farm Bureau, the CADB and the Burlington County Board of Agriculture.

D. Organize farm tours in Burlington County for County and municipal officials and the general public that increase awareness of the roles and importance of agriculture in the region, as well as the issues faced by farm families, owners and operators.

E. Increase public appreciation of farms (preserved or not) and farm operations by promoting direct-market farms, farms with Agritourism components, and producer-driven community farmers markets.

F. Create model Community Farmers Market By-Laws and Program Guidelines and assist interested parties in organizing and implementing plans for producer-driven community farmers markets in urban areas, centers, and potentially around the NJ Transit RiverLine System.

G. Examine appropriate County economic development loan programs and other financial incentives to design ways that they could be more useful to farm operators. Coordinate County financial assistance programs with those offered by the USDA, FSA and with private and cooperative lenders such as Farm Credit East to find ways that the County could expand upon and coordinate with sources of capital traditionally offered by these agencies.

H. Hold regular interagency update meetings to increase connections among County programs that could benefit agriculture.

I. Send letters to Burlington County school districts outlining on-farm educational opportunities within Burlington County.

J. Sponsor a County (or co-sponsor a statewide) summit for young and beginning farmers that will (1) document the young/beginning farmers' outlook and long-term perspective of farming as an occupation in Burlington County (New Jersey), (2) identify young/beginning farmers' perceptions of opportunities and challenges in farming, and (3) present summit attendees with a compiled set of resources, materials, and expertise available to help promote the success of their operations. Publish summit proceedings on the Internet to form the basis of a legislative agenda to aid and recruit young and beginning farmers into the region and state.

K. Promote educational opportunities for high school students throughout Burlington County that are interested in pursuing an agricultural career by facilitating their cross-enrollment in the agriculture program which includes FFA programs and curriculum.

L. Support a "positive business environment" and promote a positive image of farming in the region. Actively market this message to farmers statewide and from other areas.

M. Convene periodic round table meetings with farmers and County economic development staff to brainstorm about industry economic development needs and issues and to integrate agriculture into other economic development efforts.

N. Include agriculture in programs that deliver assistance in marketing, dealing with labor issues, regulatory relief, business management assistance, and enhanced infrastructure support.

O. Investigate the benefits of Urban Enterprise Zones and Special Improvement Districts to include businesses specializing in agricultural marketing, farm suppliers, farm service providers, and firms engaged in value-added agriculture and agribusiness.

P. Pursue federal grant opportunities for support to develop new markets, including value added.

Q. Evaluate specific needs for complementary agricultural businesses (packagers, primary processors, suppliers, agricultural service providers, etc.) and the prospect of retaining more of the food-marketing dollar within Burlington County.

R. Promote awareness of the technical, business development, and marketing programs and expertise of the Rutgers Food Innovation Center (a part of the NJAES located in Bridgeton, New Jersey). To further awareness, the County could sponsor a farmer seminar on the services provided by the Food Innovation Center.

S. Facilitate farmer awareness of opportunities to develop ethnic-based markets for existing produce and/or grow new produce items consistent with emerging ethnic markets based on the Cook College / NJDA study on potential ethnic market opportunities.

T. Promote "sustainable food" by leveraging existing resources, such as those available under the NJDA's Jersey Fresh program and by partnering with the NOFA, to encourage promotion and purchases of locally grown agricultural products. Explore opportunities to increase institutional wholesale purchases by County-based institutions (e.g. Burlington County Community College, primary and secondary schools, hospitals and correctional facilities).

U. Promote the use of 'ecological tours,' as specifically addressed in the DOE, as a means to increase farm revenue, expand business, and educate the public on the challenges and importance of sustainable agriculture.

SAMPLE INDICATORS: Number of Community Farmers Markets, Number of Pro-Ag Programs, Events and Tours, Number of Farmer Educational Programs, Trends in next US Census of Agriculture, Number of Conventional Outlets (Supermarkets, Schools, etc) that purchase locally grown products

Goal #6: Coordination of Public Sector Agricultural Services

Strategies:

Work with existing public sector agricultural service providers to:

A. Compile an online directory of available agricultural service providers and suppliers servicing, or potentially capable of servicing, farms in Burlington County.

B. Ensure staff from the various agricultural industries establish working relationships in an effort to understand the goals and promote the programs provided by each agency.

C. Evaluate existing agriculture-related programs in the surrounding region. Develop college agriculture-related programs and services to meet the needs of the agricultural community in Burlington County.

D. Provide guidance to farmers so that they better understand environmental regulations and the regulatory agencies that govern them.

E. Organize and publicize training sessions or seminars for farmers including, but not limited to, existing training programs by Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the Rutgers Food Innovation Center that focus on emerging business issues, trends, and resources available to farmers.

SAMPLE INDICATORS: Partners involved in new online directory, Depth of information in new online directory, Number of coordinated farmer training sessions or seminars.

Goal #7: Expand the Implementation of the SADC Farm Stewardship Program

Strategies:

The CADB makes the following recommendations to the SADC regarding the implementation of a largely unused section of state regulations: N.J.A.C. 2:76-20.1 et al.

A. Expand the program to fund all of its allowable uses. Currently the program is only being used to fund deer fencing projects.

B. Explore the necessary steps to increase the cap on funding for eligible projects to $100,000 per project.

SAMPLE INDICATORS: The willingness of the SADC to take action at public meeting and the engagement of various partners including CADBs in the development of this strategy

Goal #8: Promote Stewardship Efforts Focused on Mitigating the Impacts of Climate Change on Preserved Farms

Strategies:

The CADB makes the following recommendations to the SADC:

A. Request that the State Soil Conservation Committee expand the list of eligible Soil & Water Conservation cost-share projects to include practices that facilitate climate change initiatives including, but not limited to, carbon sequestration, conversion to solar, or other green energy infrastructure improvements.

B. Request that the State Soil Conservation Committee expand the list of eligible Soil & Water Conservation cost-share projects to include additional irrigation improvement practices which ensure greater efficiency and reduced water usage including, but not limited to, underground drip irrigation systems.

C. Request that the State Soil Conservation Committee expand the list of eligible Soil & Water Conservation cost-share projects to include practices that lead towards reduction in fossil fuel consumption including, but not limited to, the conversation of diesel irrigation pumps and other less-efficient irrigation pumps to higher efficiency systems.

D. Request that the SADC takes preemptive action to the greatest extent possible to ensure that Deed of Easements are consistent with current and future USDA programs aimed at environmental stewardship, climate change, and resource conservation.

E. Request that the SADC consider allowing grants through the Soil & Water Conservation Cost Share Program and the Farm Stewardship Program to be coupled with USDA grants to further incentivize and increase their rate of implementation.

SAMPLE INDICATORS: The willingness of the SADC to take action at public meeting /engagement of various partners including CADBs in the development of this strategy / providing surveys to landowners seeking input regarding their implementation of these types of measures and limitations for not doing so / tabulation of numbers and similar practices installed and quantifying the results with scientifically established data.

Factors Limiting Implementation of This Plan

The following are factors that are perceived to have the potential to limit implementation of this Plan:

- Funding for Preservation
- Limited Staff and General Administrative Resources
- Rising Acquisition Costs
- State Agency / Federal Government Rules
- Public Support for Farmers
- Land Supply
- Landowner Interest

The above should be monitored carefully by the CADB and recommendations should be made to the appropriate agency advising them if and when decisions are being made that may impact the County's ability to implement this plan.

Long-Term Monitoring of Plan Implementation

In order for the CADB to communicate progress to the Board of County Commissioners in implementing the strategies contained in this Plan, the CADB will prepare a biennial report for the Board of County Commissioners. This report will track indicators as a method of judging progress towards attainment of the stated goals. This report should be made available to the public as well. A comprehensive review of progress should be conducted 5 years after the adoption of this Plan. Unless required by State regulations or for other reasonable purposes determined by the Board of County Commissioners, this Plan should be revised and readopted ten years after adoption.