



Clarke Caton Hintz

# Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan



*Various Farms in Readington, NJ*

**Township of Readington  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey**

*Adopted February 14, 2022*



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Readington Township  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

*Adopted February 14, 2022*

*Prepared for the Township of Readington by*



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*A signed and sealed copy of this document is available at the municipal building.*



Clarke Caton Hintz

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## INTRODUCTION

### Readington Township's Farmland Preservation History

Readington Township has a long history of saving lands for Farmland Preservation and Conservation.

Prior to 1977, Readington Township was undisputedly rural. Large productive farms were the predominant land use, providing food for markets in nearby cities and metropolitan areas. Readington Township reflected the special qualities that characterized all of rural Hunterdon County, one of the most scenic areas of the Northeast, featuring rolling hills, beautiful streams, wooded areas, open farmland, and dotted with small historic villages. The Township had 20,000 acres of high quality farmland devoted to agriculture, with seven large dairy farms, horse farms, and many large poultry farms. Its farmers also produced a wide variety of products including pigs, beef cows, hay, nursery stock, Chinese vegetables, pheasants, and field crops such as corn and soybeans.

In this time period, however, it was becoming evident that our beautiful rural community was about to be quickly and irreversibly transformed. In Somerset County, located on the eastern edge of Readington, open agricultural land was dwindling in the face of suburban sprawl, which was engulfing more of the countryside each year. Because of its location, Readington faced increasing development pressure, and became the fastest growing municipality in Hunterdon County. At that time, traditional planning and zoning techniques were resulting in complete development of all the land for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes, leaving nothing for agriculture.

Readington Residents, out of concern for their future, began showing up at Township meetings asking what could be done to save the land, and the Township's rural agricultural character. They were told that nothing could be done, that suburban sprawl and the disappearance of the countryside was inevitable. The residents persisted, and in response the Township Committee appointed an Open Space Committee. The Committee recommended buying farms as they came up for sale, and selling them with an agricultural deed restriction, preserving them in perpetuity. In November 1978, Readington became the first Township in New Jersey to hold a local Referendum for Farmland Preservation and Open Space. The ballot question asked voters if they favored bonding for one million dollars to save farmland and open space in the Township. It passed with overwhelming support. Readington Township and its citizens showed that



they appreciated the value of the Township's farms and farmland. They understood the importance of maintaining agriculture in this region.

In 1979, this support was documented in Readington's first Open Space Master Plan. The Plan included an agricultural, environmental and recreational element, which addressed farmland preservation, open space preservation and natural resource protection. The plan's agricultural element made the point that *"A successful farmland preservation program would protect our remaining agricultural land and provide a permanent land base so that agriculture could remain a viable industry in the future."*

This 1979 Open Space Master Plan was accompanied by a planning report which suggested a variety of implementation techniques to preserve farmland, including easement purchase and clustering. Its introduction stated: *"Traditional zoning and planning techniques in New Jersey result in complete development of all agricultural and open land for residential, commercial, or industrial uses. The potential value of the disappearing agricultural land to the residents of the State, has just lately become appreciated. We, in Readington, at this critical time in our history, can commit ourselves to a more sensible alternative. The community has the opportunity to balance its development with the preservation of appropriate open spaces..."*. In the following decades, additional Township planning documents reiterated the support for, and importance of farmland preservation to Readington. These include the following:

- The first goal listed in the "Goals and Policies" of the 1990 Master Plan is titled "Agricultural Preservation". The goal states *"Preserve farmlands and encourage their continued use recognizing that farming is an important component of the economy of the Township, the region, and the state, and that agricultural lands are an irreplaceable natural resource."* (Pg. 5).
- The first goal listed in the "Statement of Objectives, Principles, Assumptions, Policies, and Standards" of the 2009 Master Plan Amendment is titled "Agricultural Preservation". The goal states *"Preserve farmlands and encourage their continued use recognizing that farming is an important component of the economy of the Township, the region, and the State, and that agricultural lands are an irreplaceable natural resource and a key element of the Township's rural character"*. (GP-1).

In 2021, thanks to the incredible success of the State, County and the Townships' preservation programs, agriculture is still a viable industry in Readington Township, in Hunterdon County and in the State of New Jersey. Hunterdon County is one of New



Jersey's leading agricultural counties. The county has the State's highest amount of farmland-assessed property, with approximately 43% of its landmass devoted to agriculture. Hunterdon ranks second statewide in preservation efforts. As of August 2020, Hunterdon County reported 36,232 acres of preserved farmland. As of November of 2021, there were 4,910.68<sup>1</sup> acres of preserved farmland in Readington Township. This figure includes farmland that has obtained final approval for preservation and easements acquired via Green Acres, cluster development, and donation. This equates to approximately 13% of the farmland currently preserved within in Hunterdon County.

But more needs to be accomplished. In New Jersey, farmland continues to disappear rapidly. The effect of the loss of the farmland to the citizens of the State is serious. When we lose farmland, we lose the benefits farmland provides as privately owned open space. Farmlands contribute to our scenic and cultural landscape, provide important wildlife habitat, and provide vital groundwater recharge areas.

### **History of Farmland Preservation Legislation in New Jersey**

As a result, grassroots concern over 40 years ago turned into well thought out plans and positive action. Readington's preservation program, with the future support of the County and the State Preservation Programs, has saved, not only significant amounts of land, but also important elements of the Township's historic rural character. Readington's "grassroots" efforts inspired the formation of the Hunterdon County Farmland Program, which held its first funding referendum in 1980 and the State Farmland Preservation Program which held its first funding referendum in 1981. The Agricultural Development and Retention Act was passed in 1983, marking the beginning of the State's current Farmland Preservation Program.

Preservation of farmland is essential to preserving the agricultural industry, a vitally important economic asset. In order for New Jersey to sustain a healthy agricultural industry, a critical mass of farmland has to be maintained in appropriate areas. Five hundred thousand acres has been set as the goal to be preserved if the State is to maintain its agricultural base.

Readington Township's first application for a Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) was filed in 1999. The following two decades have seen more progress toward protecting both the State's and the Township's precious remaining farmland acres than in any similar period of time in the Township's history. Readington Township's success in this time

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<sup>1</sup> Acreage is based off of the most recent Inventory of Preserved Farmland located in Appendix A. This figure will slightly differ from maps in the plan that rely on GIS data.



period has been dramatic, and participation in the State's PIG Program has factored highly in this success.

The importance of farmland preservation has been embodied in policy and law at many different levels of government. The State Farmland Preservation Planning Incentive Grant program is one of the most comprehensive programs aimed at furthering agriculture and retaining its future viability in the state as urbanization continues to steadily erode the farming base. Coupled with the funding attached to the Garden State Preservation Trust Act, the program seeks to preserve a significant area of reasonably contiguous farmland that will promote the long term viability of agriculture. The Act provides a steady annual funding allocation specifically earmarked for farmland preservation. Previously, funding was obtained only from periodic bond referendums and at lower levels. Additionally, on November 4, 2014, New Jersey voters approved the dedication of a percentage of the Corporate Business Tax (CBT) toward environmental, conservation, and preservation programs. This dedication took effect in 2015 at 4% and increased to 6% in 2020. It resulted in an annual amount of \$164 million for the Garden State Preservation Trust Conservation and Preservation Programs, with 31% or \$50.8 million reserved Statewide for Farmland Preservation.

This element is intended to meet the criteria for the Planning Incentive Grant program and follows the guidelines for developing a Municipal Comprehensive Farmland Plan, adopted May 24, 2007, and readopted as amended on July 25, 2019. In addition, Farmland Preservations Plans have been specifically authorized as an element of municipal master plans (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28.b(13)*) since 1999 when the Municipal Land Use Law was amended. A Farmland Preservation Plan is required to include:

- *An inventory of farm properties and a map illustrating significant areas of agricultural land;*
- *A statement showing that municipal ordinances support and promote agriculture as a business; and,*
- *A plan for preserving as much farmland as possible in the short term by leveraging monies made available through the Farmland Preservation Planning Incentive Grant program which may include option agreements, installment purchases, and donations of permanent development easements, among other techniques.*

This document will address both the SADC guidelines for a Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan and MLUL requirements for a Farmland Preservation Plan element.



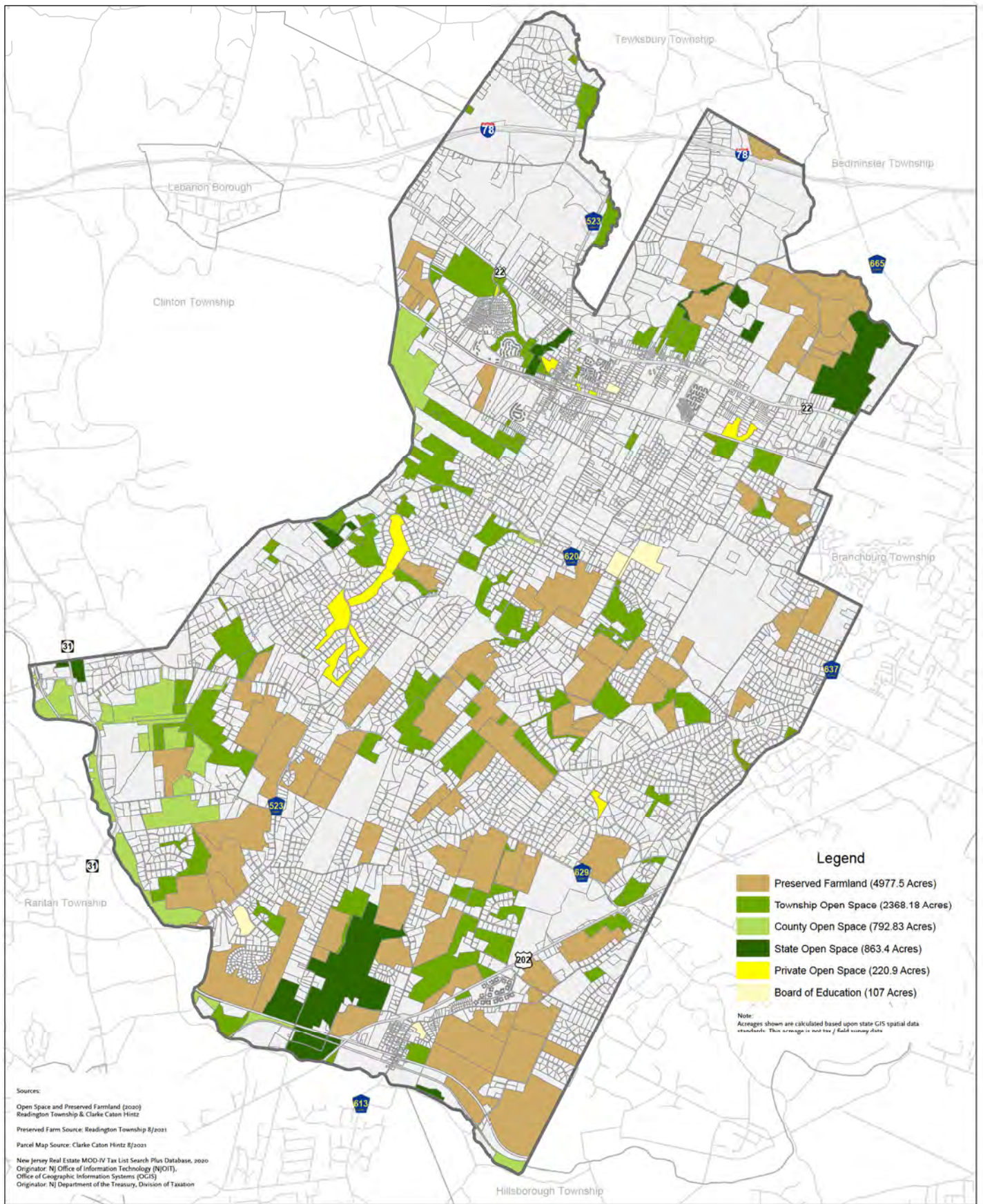


Readington Township's first Farm Preservation Plan was adopted in 2009. This document represents the most recent data available, and uses the guidelines for developing municipal comprehensive farmland preservation plans that were readopted as amended on July 25, 2019. This Plan will replace the previously adopted Plan.

### **Timeline of Important Farmland Preservation Events in Readington's History**

The following timeline identifies key dates in the history of farmland preservation in Readington Township. Appendix E contains a more comprehensive timeline.

- 1978: Readington Township is the first local government in the State to approve a referendum to fund Farmland Preservation and Open Space.
- 1979: Readington Township's first Open Space Master Plan was adopted. The Plan included an Agricultural Element that discussed the need to preserve farmland. It was accompanied by a planning report that described farmland preservation techniques, including easement purchasing and clustering.
- 1987: The Wallendjack Farm was the first farm in Readington Township to be preserved. It was the fourth farm in New Jersey, and the second farm in Hunterdon County preserved under the State's Farmland Preservation Program
- 1988: Readington adopted a mandatory 80/20 cluster ordinance requiring that 80% of a tract be deed restricted for agriculture, and preserving farmland.
- 1994: Readington Township voters passed a referendum that set aside \$.02 for every \$100 of taxpayer money for land preservation.
- 1998: Readington's Master Plan amendment called for the creation of the Agricultural Residential (AR) Zone. The AR zoning encompassed the lands designated in Readington as part of the Agricultural Development Area and mandated clustering to preserve farmlands.
- 1999: The 1998 Master Plan amendment received an Achievement in Planning Award from the New Jersey Planning Officials.
- 1999: Readington Township was awarded \$3.18 million for its first Planning Incentive Grant Application for farmland preservation.
- 2000: Readington Township auctions a 110 acre preserved farm, which the Township had purchased in fee, then deed restricted to agricultural use pursuant to the FP Program. The Township, as the owner of the easement, and applicant to the State Easement Purchase Program, sold the easement to Hunterdon County.
- 2009: Readington Township adopted its first Farmland Preservation Plan.
- 2013: Readington Township received an award from the New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee for preserving the most farms under the State's Planning Incentive Program.

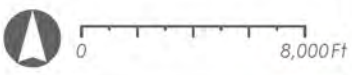


**Legend**

- Preserved Farmland (4977.5 Acres)
- Township Open Space (2368.18 Acres)
- County Open Space (792.83 Acres)
- State Open Space (863.4 Acres)
- Private Open Space (220.9 Acres)
- Board of Education (107 Acres)

Note:  
Acreages shown are calculated based upon state GIS spatial data standards. This acreage is not tax / field survey data.

Sources:  
Open Space and Preserved Farmland (2020)  
Readington Township & Clarke Caton Hintz  
Preserved Farm Source: Readington Township 8/2021  
Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 8/2021  
New Jersey Real Estate MOD-IV Tax List Search Plus Database, 2020  
Originator: NJ Office of Information Technology (NJGIT),  
Office of Geographic Information Systems (OGIS)  
Originator: NJ Department of the Treasury, Division of Taxation



**Clarke Caton Hintz** ● ● ■  
Architecture  
Planning  
Landscape Architecture

# Preserved Farmland and Open Space

LOCATION: Readington Township, Hunterdon County, NJ | DATE: November 2021

**Open Space: 4,352.3 Acres**  
**Preserved Farmland: 4,977.5 Acres**  
**Open Space & Farmland: 9,329.8 Acres**



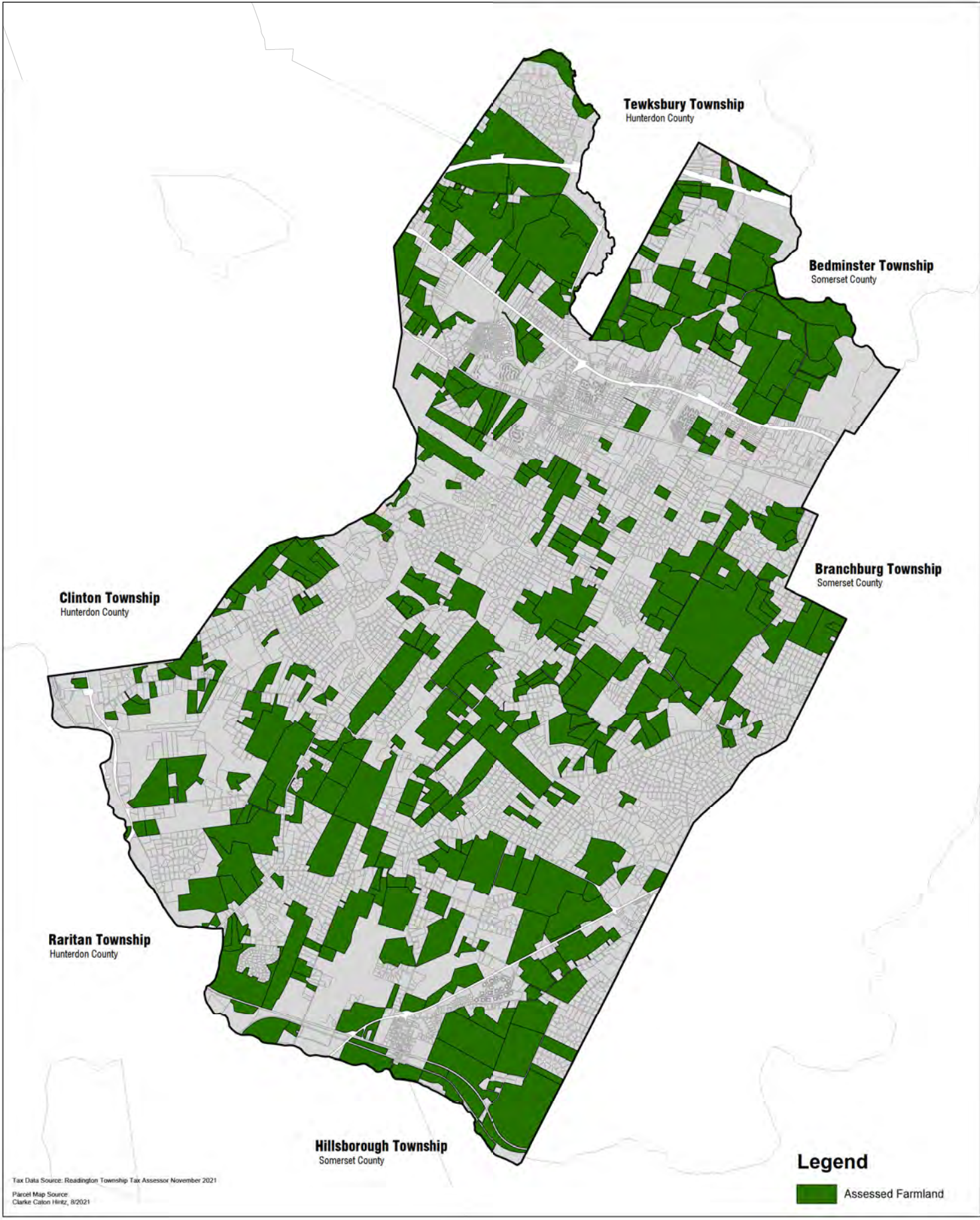
## I. READINGTON'S AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE

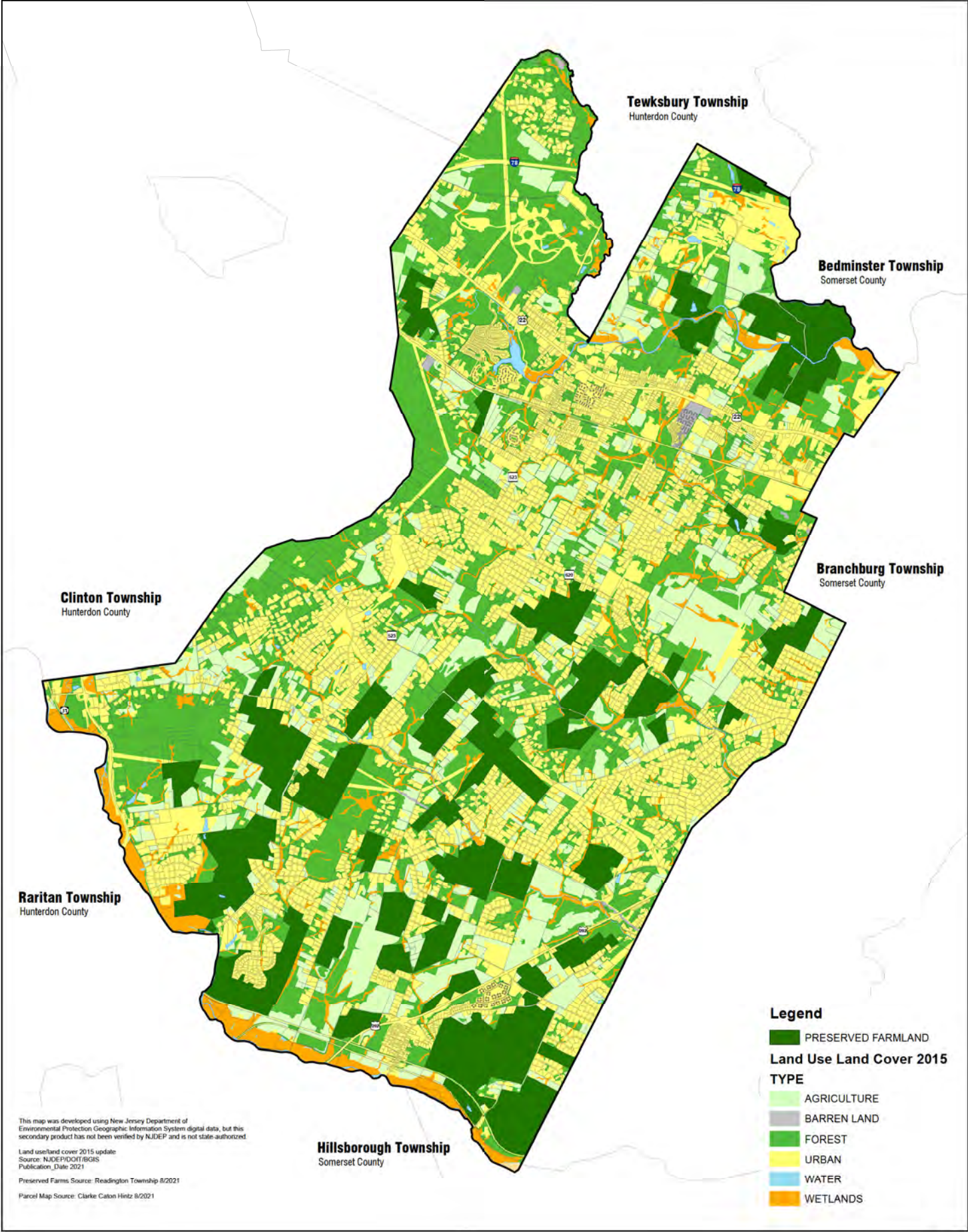
### A. LOCATION AND SIZE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE

As of January 2021, Readington Township contained 11,215 acres of farm assessed land. This represents approximately 37% of the Township's land mass. The accompanying map shows the location of farm assessed properties within Readington.

Farmland assessment data is compiled by the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC) in an annual Farmland Assessment Survey. The most recent survey, for the 2019 tax year, indicates a total of 11,115 acres in agricultural use within the Township. The majority of agriculturally assessed lands (7,300 acres, or 66%) are classified as "active agricultural" lands, which includes cropland harvested, cropland pastured and permanent pasture acreage. Woodlands comprise 3,741 acres, or approximately one third (34%) of the Township's agriculturally assessed land. 55 acres (0.5%) of Readington's agriculturally assessed land is classified as equine acreage. The remaining 17 acres (0.1%) is classified as renewable energy acreage. The Township ranks third in the total number of acres of land devoted to agricultural use among the 26 municipalities in Hunterdon County.

The accompanying Land Use/Land Cover map shows the approximate location of active agricultural lands in Readington and surrounding communities. The current total of active agricultural land (7736.33) in the Township is approximately 0.6% less than the 7784.50 acres of agricultural land use indicated under the 2012 NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover mapping, which is primarily due to conversion of farmland to residential development. However, as shown on the Land Use/Land Cover map, significant areas of farmland and open space have been preserved to date throughout the Township. As of November, 2021, there were 4,910 acres of preserved farmland (including 107 acres with final approvals) and 4,352.3 acres of preserved open space (including 2,334.13 open space acres compatible with agriculture). Altogether, these 9,329.8 acres of preserved land represent approximately 30% of the Township's land area.





**Legend**

- PRESERVED FARMLAND

**Land Use Land Cover 2015 TYPE**

- AGRICULTURE
- BARREN LAND
- FOREST
- URBAN
- WATER
- WETLANDS

This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.

Land use/land cover 2015 update  
 Source: NJDEP/DOIT/BGIS  
 Publication Date 2021

Preserved Farms Source: Readington Township 8/2021

Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 8/2021

**Hillsborough Township**  
Somerset County

2021 FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

# 2015 Land Use/ Land Cover

Readington Township, Hunterdon County, NJ

1,800 900 0 1,800 3,600 5,400 Feet

**Clarke Caton Hintz** ● ● ●

Architectural

Planning

Landscape Architecture



## **B. DISTRIBUTION OF SOIL TYPES AND SOIL CHARACTERISTICS**

The Soils Map of Readington Township presents the 36 types of soils found in Readington as identified by the Soil Conservation Service. Prime Agricultural Soils and Soils of Statewide Importance are shown on the map of Agricultural Soils. Several soils occur more frequently in Readington Township than others. The following is a listing of these soils and brief descriptions of their properties.

### **Prime Agricultural Soils**

Prime Farmlands include all those soils in Land Capability Class I and selected soils from Land Capability Class II. Prime Farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, Prime Farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.

### **Soils of Statewide Importance**

Farmlands of statewide importance include those soils in land capability Class II and III that do not meet the criteria as Prime Farmland. These soils are nearly Prime Farmland and economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce yields as high as Prime Farmland if conditions are favorable.

### **Annandale and Edneyville Series (ApB, ApC)**

This series consists of deep gently sloping to strongly sloping, well drained, loamy soils. Permeability is moderate in the surface layer and substratum and moderately slow to slow in the subsoil. The available water capacity is high, and natural fertility is moderate. The gently sloping soils are suited to corn, small grain, soybeans, orchard crops, hay, or pasture. Steeper soils are suited to hay, pasture or trees. Control of erosion is needed in cultivated areas. The agricultural suitability of the soils in this series appears in Class I & Class II.

### **Bucks Series (Bub, BuC2)**

This series consists of deep gently sloping to strongly sloping, well-drained soils that are underlain by Red Shale. These soils are on uplands. Red Shale bedrock is at a depth of about 44 inches. Permeability is moderate to moderately slow to moderately rapid in the underlying material. These soils have a high available water capacity. Natural fertility is



moderate. Crops on Bucks soils respond well to lime and fertilizer. Most areas of Bucks soils have been cleared and are farmed. Control of erosion is needed in cultivated areas. The soils are well suited to corn, small grain, soybeans, nursery crops, pasture and hay. The subsoils of this series are in Class II or III.

**Klinesville Series (KIC, KID)**

This series consists of shallow, gently sloping to moderately steep, well-drained soils on uplands. Permeability is moderately rapid. Available water capacity and natural fertility are low. The shallow depth of these soils causes low crop production. Many areas of the soils are wooded, especially the steeper slopes. Cleared areas of these soils are used for small grain, hay, and pasture. Areas of sloping to moderately steep soils which have been cleared need careful control of erosion. Many areas are idle or reverting to trees. During periods of prolonged rainfall, the soil becomes saturated and water flows along the surface of the hard bedrock. Water seeps into cellars during these periods. Klinesville soils fall into Class II and III.

**Norton Series (NoB, NoC2, NoD2)**

This series consists of deep, gently sloping to moderately steep soils that formed on rounded slopes and divides in material weathered from old red shale glacial till. Permeability is slow. Available water capacity is high, natural fertility is moderate. Extensive, formerly cleared areas are now idle and reverting to trees. Small areas are used for corn, small grain, hay and pasture. Tillage is delayed in places by excess water above the firm subsoil, but water does not stay in the profile for long periods. Control of erosion is needed. Norton soils are in Classes II and III.

**Legend**

Soil Type*	DunC	MonB	PepB
ANWTB	FNAT	MopBb	PepC2
ANWTC	FmhAt	NeeB	QY
AbrA	HcuAt	NehB	ROPF
AbrB	HdyB	NehC2	RarAr
AtdB	HdyC2	NehCb	RarB
AtdC2	KkoC	NehDb	RedB
AtdD2	KkoD	NehEb	RedC2
BhnA	KkoE	NemCb	RehA
BhnB	LbmD	NotB	RehB
BhnC	LbtA	NotC	RehC2
BhnC2	LbtB	NotC2	RepwA
BoyAt	LdmB	NotD2	RepwB
BucB	LdmC2	PHG	RksB
BucC2	LegB	PbpAt	RorAt
CanBb	LegC	PenB	TurB
ChcA	LegD	PeoB	UdrB
ChcB	LemB	PeoC	WATER
CoxA	LemBb	PeoC2	
DunB	LemC2	PeoD	

**Tewksbury Township**  
Hunterdon County

**Bedminster Township**  
Somerset County

**Branchburg Township**  
Somerset County

**Clinton Township**  
Hunterdon County

**Raritan Township**  
Hunterdon County

**Hillsborough Township**  
Somerset County

This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state authorized.

Soil Survey: USDA / 202007 nSSLURGO database.  
Created using SSLURGO data from the July 2020 Refresh.

Parcel Map Source:  
Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 8/2021



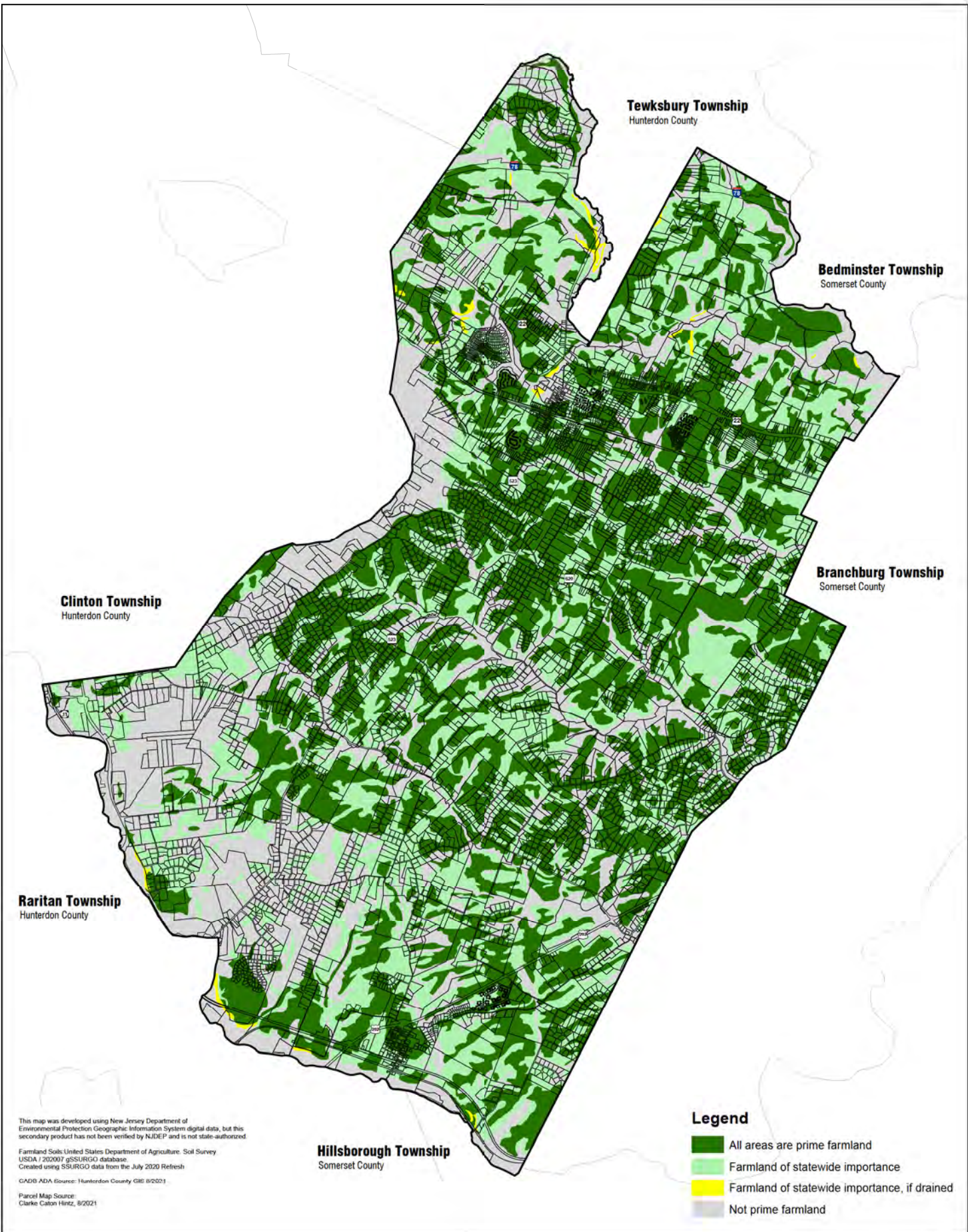
Clarke Caton Hintz

ARCHITECTS

PLANNING

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE





This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.

Farmland Soils: United States Department of Agriculture. Soil Survey USDA / 200007 gSSURGO database. Created using SSURGO data from the July 2020 Refresh

CADD: ADA Source: 1 Hunterdon County GIS 8/2021

Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz, 8/2021

**Hillsborough Township**  
Somerset County

**Tewksbury Township**  
Hunterdon County

**Bedminster Township**  
Somerset County

**Clinton Township**  
Hunterdon County

**Branchburg Township**  
Somerset County

**Raritan Township**  
Hunterdon County

**Legend**

- All areas are prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Farmland of statewide importance, if drained
- Not prime farmland



### **Penn Series (PeB, PeC, PeD)**

This series consists of moderately deep, gently sloping to moderately steep, well-drained, loamy soil that formed over red shale or siltstone on uplands. Permeability is moderate to moderately rapid in the surface layer and subsoil. Available water capacity is moderate to high depending on the depth to bedrock and the content of shale. Natural fertility is moderate. Most areas of Penn soils have been cleared for farming. Many areas of the more sloping soils are wooded. Cleared areas require erosion control. In places, late in winter and early in spring, the lowest part of the subsoil is saturated, and water flows laterally over the surface of the bedrock. Water seeps into cellars during these periods. Classes II and III are represented in this series.

The Soil Conservation Service divides the agricultural capabilities of soils into the following classes:

*Class I soils have few limitations that restrict their use.*

*Class II soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require moderate conservation practices.*

*Class III soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require special conservation practices, or both.*

*Class IV soils have very severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, require very careful management, or both.*

*Class V soils are not likely to erode but have other limitations, impractical to remove, that limit their use largely to pasture, woodland, or wildlife habitat.*

*Class VI soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuited to cultivation and limit their use largely to pasture, woodland, or wildlife habitat.*

*Class VII soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuited to cultivation and that restrict their use largely to pasture, woodland, or wildlife habitat.*

*Class VIII soils and landforms have limitations that preclude their use for commercial plants and restrict their use to recreation, wildlife, water supply, or to aesthetic purposes. (No class VIII soils exist in Hunterdon County.)*

Only the first four classes are well suited for receiving agricultural crops. All soils series found in Readington have at least one sub-group which can be used for crop production of some type.

## **C. NUMBER OF IRRIGATED ACRES AND AVAILABLE WATER RESOURCES**

Based on Farmland Assessment data, Readington Township has very little irrigated acreage. As indicated in the following table, the irrigated acreage represented less than 1% of acreage for selected years between 1990 and 2017.



Table 1: Irrigated Acres in Readington Township, 1990 – 2017						
	1990	2000	2004	2006	2012	2017
Irrigated Acres	0	52	40	25	20	50
Active Agriculture	10,945	9,385	8,378	8,123	7,695	7,339
<i>Source: SADC Farmland Assessment Summaries, 1990 - 2017</i>						

The fluctuations in the number of irrigated acres reported between 1990 and 2017 are most likely based on a number of factors, including variations in rainfall and temperature, variations in the type and location of crops on individual farms, and inconsistencies in the way data is reported by farmers. Examples of the limited number of farms currently relying on irrigation include:

- Hidden Meadows Nursery: A 50-acre nursery dedicated entirely to the production of irrigated nursery stock.
- Hionis Greenhouses: A very large indoor greenhouse operation, located on 15 acres, which produces vegetable and flower plants for local and regional retail outlets. In addition, they produce mums outside at a separate 20-acre location nearby.
- Nicholson Farm (BLN, LLC): A 132 acre preserved farm that has approximately 30 acres of nursery crops using irrigation.
- Schaeffer Farms: This farm is 218-preserved farm which features an active farm market, selling a variety of flowers and vegetables, and specializing in sweet corn in season, is set up to irrigate 200 acres. The irrigation is used every year for hothouses and vegetables. The larger fields which grow sweet corn only use the irrigation when unusually dry weather calls for it.
- Readington River Buffalo Farm: This 233 acre preserved farm which features a very active farm market selling vegetables is set up to irrigate four acres for vegetable production. Irrigation is used only as needed when crops and weather require it.
- Profeta Farms: In 2020, about half of this 360-acre farm was leased to Vacchiano Farm, LLC. The new farmers plan to use irrigated acreage to grow vegetables for direct marketing, just as the previous operator, Profeta Farms did, on approximately 40 acres.
- Misty Acres Farm and Dancing Feather Farm (Former Reno Farm) are two larger farm operations that include several irrigated acres each, devoted to vegetable production to be used for direct marketing.

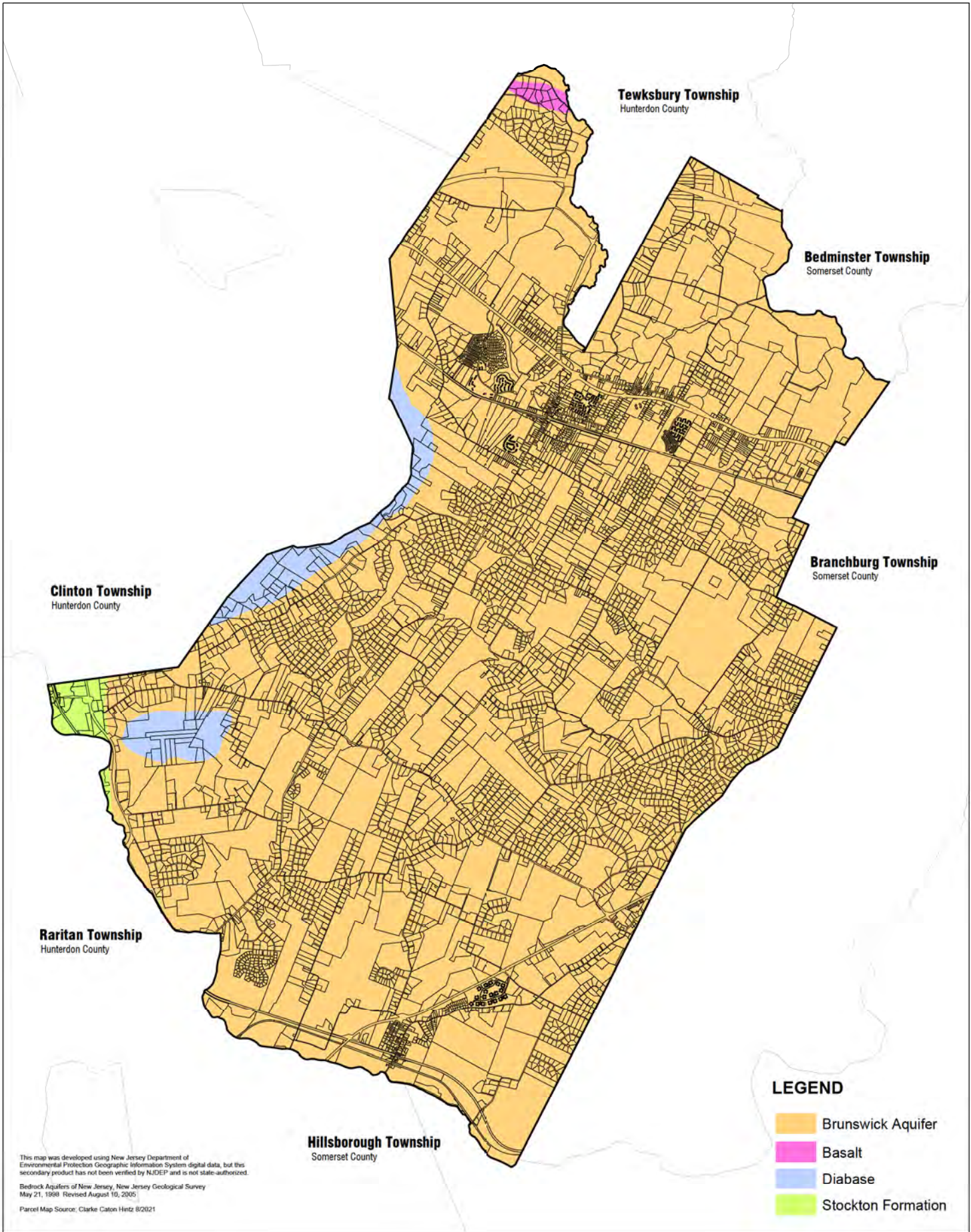


Readington's available water resources:

- Readington has abundant clean water. With almost 50 inches of rainfall each year, crops growing on Readington's farm fields usually have plenty of water. In addition, Readington's largest underground aquifer supplies ample well water for residential, commercial, and agricultural uses. Although it's not likely, future agricultural uses could also rely on clean water from Readington's streams and rivers.

Aquifer/Formation	Total Estimated Yield (mgd)	Average Domestic Well Yields (gpm)
Brunswick	22.6	19
Diabase	0.36	8
Stockton	0.18	20
Basalt	0.03	5

*Source: Readington Township Natural Resource Inventory, 2001*



This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.

Bedrock Aquifers of New Jersey, New Jersey Geological Survey  
 May 21, 1998 Revised August 10, 2005

Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 8/2021

**LEGEND**

- Brunswick Aquifer
- Basalt
- Diabase
- Stockton Formation





## D. FARMLAND ASSESSMENT AND CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE STATISTICS AND TRENDS

### D.1 Number of Farms and Farms by Size

As of 2020, Readington Township had 412 farm-assessed properties. As of 2017, the most recent data available for farmland by acreage (the Agricultural Census is published every five years), Readington Township had 11,190 acres devoted to agriculture. By grouping these properties according to common ownership, the number of farms within the Township is estimated at 412. As shown in the following chart, the majority of these farms are 10 – 49 acres (48%) or 1 – 9 acres (37%) in size. Similarly, data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture, indicates that the majority of farms within Hunterdon County are between 10 and 49 acres (51%) or 1 – 9 acres (24%) in size.

Farm Size	Readington Twp.		Hunterdon Co.	
	# farms	%	# farms	%
1 - 9 acres	151	37%	392	24%
10 - 49 acres	197	48%	816	51%
50 - 179 acres	59	14%	300	19%
180 - 499 acres	5	1%	71	4%
500 - 999 acres	0	0%	14	1%
1,000 acres or more	0	0%	11	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1604</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Readington Township Tax Assessment data, August 2020, adjusted to combine adjacent properties under common ownership; 2017 Census of Agriculture (Hunterdon County)*

### D.2 Average and Median Farm Size

The average size of January 2021 farm assessed properties is 24.43 acres. The median size of January 2021 farm assessed properties is 10.18 acres. As indicated in the following chart, the average and median farm size in Hunterdon County and in New Jersey has been steadily decreasing over the past several decades, though there was a size increase in 2012 compared to 2007, by 2017 the increase has mostly been erased. Although similar historical data is not available for Readington Township, it is likely that the average farm size has similarly decreased over the same time period.



<b>Table 4: Average and Median Farm Size, Hunterdon Co. and New Jersey, 1997 - 2017</b>					
	1997 (acres)	2002 (acres)	2007 (acres)	2012 (acres)	2017 (acres)
Avg. Farm Size, Hunterdon Co.	80	72	62	66	63
Median Farm Size, Hunterdon Co.	27	24	19	20	17
Avg. Farm Size, New Jersey	91	81	71	79	74
Median Farm Size, New Jersey	23	22	17	20	16
<i>Source: U.S.Census of Agriculture, 1997 – 2017</i>					

### D.3 Cropland Harvested, Pasture, Woodland, Equine, Agricultural Use

As indicated in following tables, cropland harvested acreage represents the largest category of agricultural land use in Readington, totaling 4,607 acres, and representing 41% of total agricultural use in 2017. Active agricultural use (cropland harvested, cropland pastured, and permanent pasture) in 2017 was 7,339 acres, representing 66% of total agricultural use. Woodland acreage represents nearly a third of the Township’s agricultural land, and equine acres and renewable energy acres each account for less than 1% of agricultural land respectively. As also shown in the table, the distribution of agricultural land use within Readington is very similar to that of Hunterdon County.



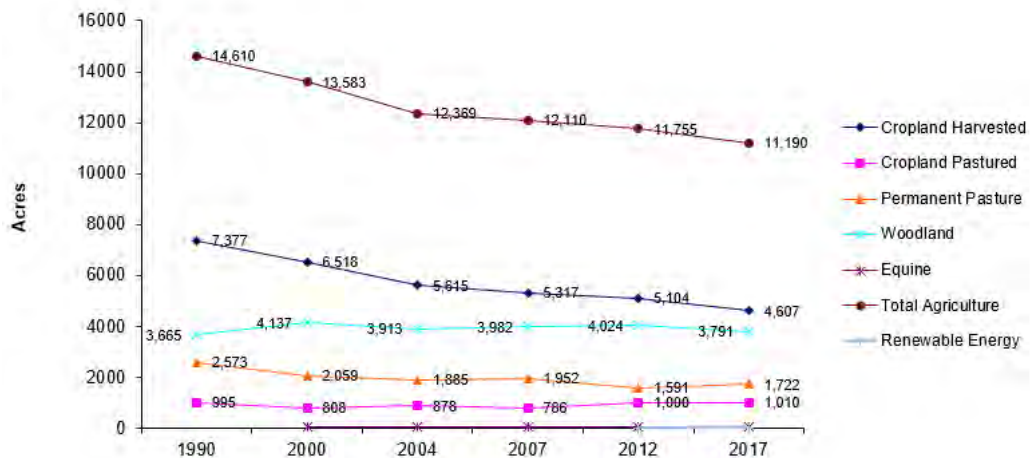
**Table 5: 2017 Farmland Assessment Data, Readington and Hunterdon Co.**

	Readington Township		Hunterdon County	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Cropland Harvested	4,607	41%	54,294	45%
Cropland Pastured	1,010	9%	5,795	6%
Permanent Pasture	1,722	15%	14,609	12%
<i>(Active Agriculture Subtotal)</i>	<i>(7,339)</i>	<i>(66%)</i>	<i>(74,698)</i>	<i>(62%)</i>
Woodland	3,791	34%	45,176	37%
Equine	43	< 1%	621	1%
Renewable Energy	17	< 1%	40	< 1%
<b>Total Agriculture Use</b>	<b>11,190</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>120,535</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: SADC Farmland Assessment Summary, 2017*

As illustrated in the following chart, examination of farmland assessment data over the past 27 years shows a decrease in the proportion of cropland harvested and cropland pastured acreages within Readington. In contrast, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of woodland acreage in the Township during this time period, though that is declining slightly from a peak in 2000.

**Chart 1: Farmland Acreage in Readington Township: 1990 - 2017**



*Source: SADC Farmland Assessment Summaries, 1990 - 2017*





## II. READINGTON'S AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

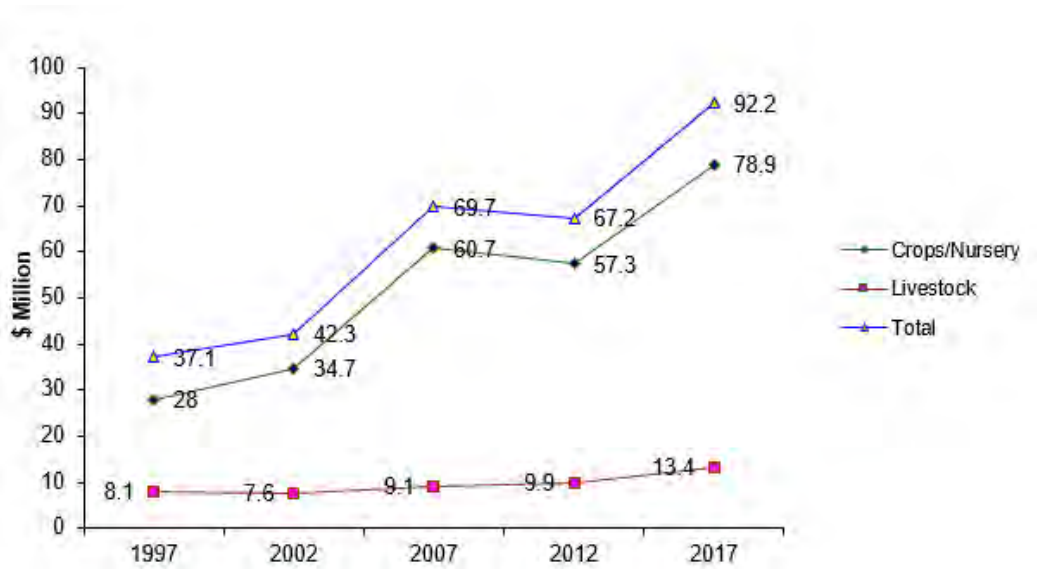
### A. TRENDS IN MARKET VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SOLD

Agricultural sales data is compiled at the County level every five years as part of the National Census of Agriculture. As shown in the following chart, total agricultural sales in the County have increased by approximately 149% over the past two decades. The past five years have seen an increase in sales (37%). Sales of crops, including nursery stock, represent the great majority of agricultural sales in the County and have increased in line with total agricultural sales. Livestock sales had been gradually decreasing until 2002, when they started slowly increasing. 2017 saw the highest volume of sales of livestock in decades.





Chart 2: Hunterdon County Agricultural Sales, 1997 - 2017

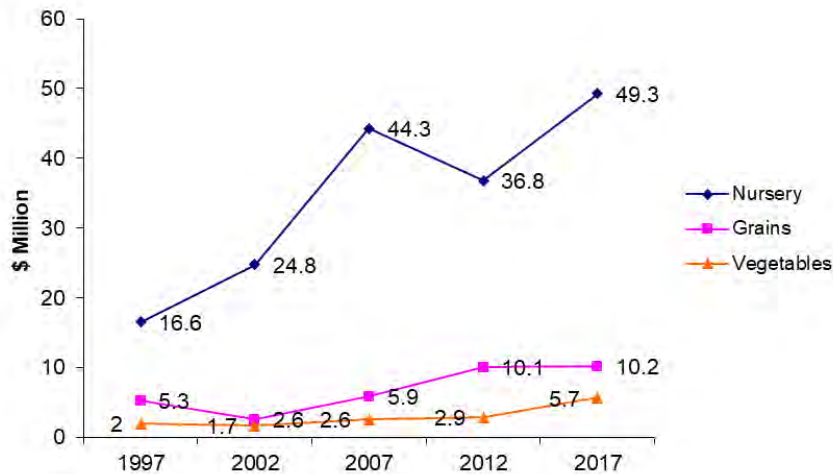


Source: U.S Census of Agriculture, 1997 – 2017

According to the 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture, the top commodity in the County is nursery stock, followed by the grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas category. The third most valuable commodity is the hay and other crops category. As indicated in the following chart, nursery sales, which represent the majority of all crop sales, have increased significantly in recent years. Sales of grains and vegetables have increased steadily.



Chart 3: Hunterdon County Crop Sales, 1997 - 2017



Source: U.S Census of Agriculture, 1997 - 2017

Although agricultural sales data is not available at the municipal level, observations of recent sales trends for selected crops in Readington are generally consistent with the County crop sales trends between 2012 and 2017. For example:

- Hay: Thousands of acres in Readington are devoted to hay production. The price of hay has increased over the last 5 years and the market continues to be very strong. Increases in fuel and fertilizer costs have likely offset this gain, however. The demand for hay is driven primarily by the equine industry, which continues to grow at a steady rate.
- Grain: Several farmers from Readington still plant large acreages of corn and soybeans and market prices and profits for both have increased substantially in the last several years.
- Pumpkins: There is a strong market for locally grown pumpkins and an upward trend in price. About six farms in Readington benefit from continuing price increases.



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- Vegetables prices at local farm stands have increased only slightly in recent years. The local farms in Readington generally use family labor.

As previously noted, livestock sales have gradually declined in the County. Sales of milk and dairy products have seen the greatest decline since 1987, as illustrated in the following chart. However, there has been a small increase in livestock sales over the last five years, which may be in part due to the development of more specialized markets. For example, sales of bison meat, beef, pork, and chicken eggs in Readington have benefited from local direct marketing:



- **Bison Meat:** The market remains strong for the direct marketing of bison meat. The Readington River Buffalo Farm has maintained high prices over the last five years, and increased slightly.
- **Beef and Pork Prices:** Hackettstown Auction prices have shown an increase in pig and cattle prices over the last five years, and local direct

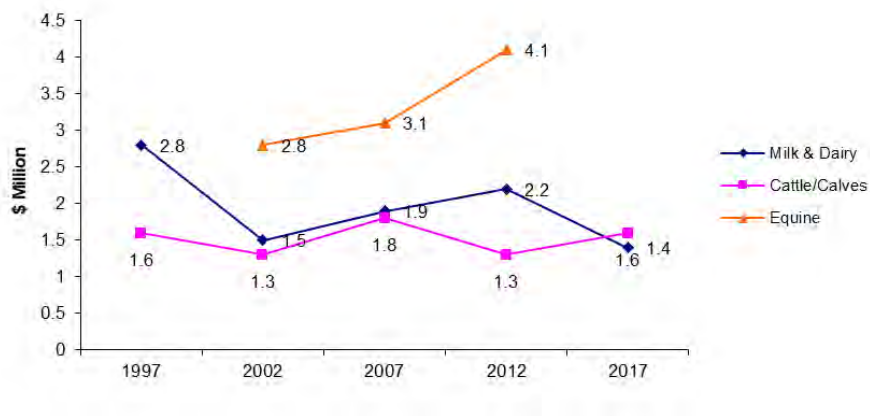


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marketing prices are up over 20%. However, it is doubtful whether these increases have kept ahead of feed prices.

- Eggs: A large number of Readington residents have chickens. Some farms have 40 or more layers and a lot of families have backyard coops of 20 or fewer layers.

**Chart 4: Hunterdon County Livestock Sales, 1997 - 2017**



Source: U.S Census of Agriculture, 1997 - 2017



**B. CROP/PRODUCTION TRENDS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS**

The following table illustrates production trends for selected crops and livestock within Readington over the last 20+ years.

Table 6: Agricultural Production Trends in Readington Township						
Commodity	1990	2000	2007	2012	2017	% Change, 1990 – 2017
<b>Crops (acres)</b>						
Apples	14	6	14	6	24	+71%
Corn (grain & silage)	856	367	527	595	700	-18%
Grain (oats, wheat, barley, rye, sorghum)	727	1,227	238	433	720	-1%
Hay	3,505	3,037	3,202	2533	2,966	-15%
Peaches	18	5	7	2	1	-94%
Soybeans	351	127	109	177	95	-73%
Berries	18	6	5	4	4	-78%
Trees, Christmas	126	122	139	106	72	-43%
Trees & Shrubs, nursery	268	210	215	155	175	-35%
<b>Livestock (number)</b>						
Cattle, beef	472	434	548	392	525	+11%
Cattle, dairy	167	22	39	51	44	-74%
Chickens, layers	1,133	620	1,086	?	1,704	+50%
Chickens, meat	1,547	643	433	344	453	-71%
Horses	359	426	478	405	560	+56%
Pigs	349	308	279	189	168	-52%
Sheep	1,435	667	672	411	378	-74%
Turkeys	456	220	189	11	92	-80%
<i>Source: SADC Farmland Assessment Summaries, 1990 - 2017</i>						

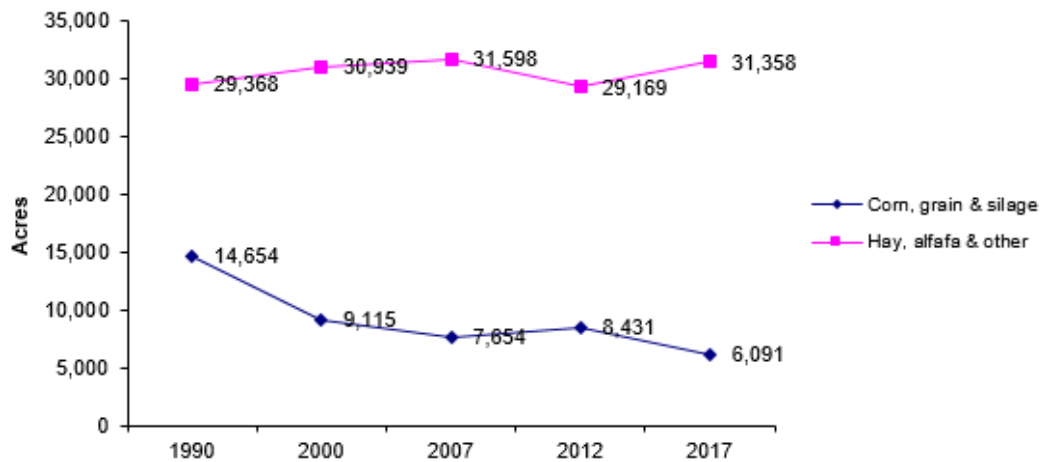
As indicated in the preceding table, hay has consistently been the largest crop in terms of acres produced within the Township over the years. The acreage of hay has steadily decreased since 1990. Similarly, corn and grain acreage has generally decreased over the years, though grain has increased to be nearly equal to its 1990 levels. A comparison of



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hay and corn production in Hunterdon County over the same time period shows a similar trend regarding hay acreage, while the County as a whole is not experiencing the same recent uptick in corn production as Readington, as illustrated in the following line graph chart.

Chart 5: Hunterdon County Crop Production, 1990 - 2017



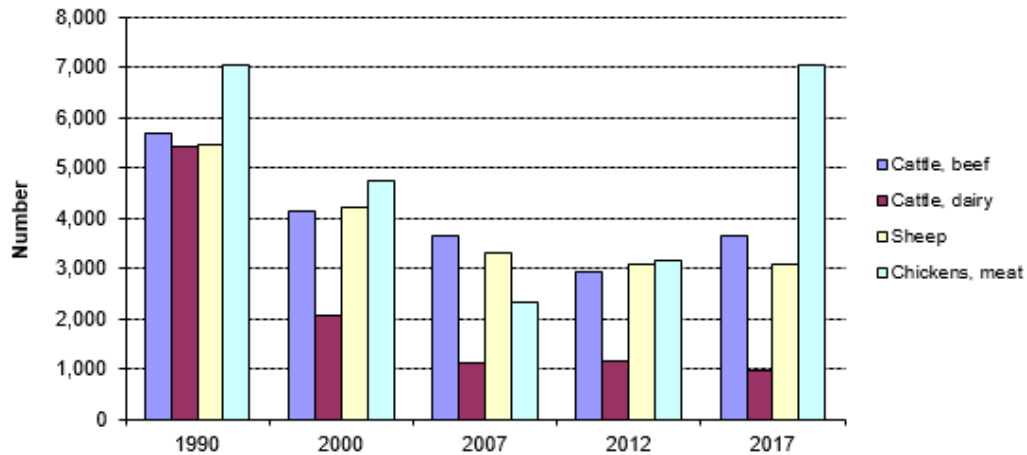
Source: SADC Farmland Assessment Summaries, 1983 - 2017

According to the 2017 SADC Farmland Assessment State Summary, which breaks down agricultural production by county, Hunterdon County field crops represent the great majority of acreage for farming, with nursery operations second in acreage and vegetables ranked third. The same pattern prevailed in Readington in 2017, with field crops (in particular, hay) representing the majority of the Township's active agricultural acreage, and nursery operations and vegetables ranked second and third, respectively.

Livestock production is measured in the number of animals, and thus cannot be directly compared with the acreage of crop production. However, in general, livestock production in the Township has declined over the past 27 years, as shown in the preceding table (Table 6 on the previous page). This trend is also true in the County, with the exception of chicken meat production which is nearly equal to its 1990 high, as illustrated in the following bar graph depicting selected livestock production numbers between 1990 - 2017.



Chart 6: Hunterdon County Livestock Production, 1990 - 2017



Source: SADC Farmland Assessment Summaries, 1983 - 2017

### C. SUPPORT SERVICES WITHIN MARKET REGION

#### Farm Equipment

- Barnes Farm Repairs, Ringoes, NJ
- Champion Tires, Ringoes, NJ
- Dave’s Equipment, Ringoes, NJ
- Deer Country Farm and Lawn, Allentown, NJ
- Everitt Equipment, Ringoes, NJ
- Power Place, Whitehouse Station, NJ
- Kuhl Corporation, Flemington, NJ
- Mid-state Equipment, Titusville, PA
- Pennington Sales & Service, Pennington, NJ
- Pole Tavern Equipment, Elmer, NJ
- Powerco, Inc., Clinton, NJ
- Smith Tractor, Washington, NJ
- Trenton Tractor and Equipment, Trenton, NJ
- Zimmerman Equipment, Ephrata, PA
- Tractor Supply Store, Ringoes, NJ
- The Hose Shop, Bridgewater, NJ

#### Farmers’ Markets

- Clinton Farmers Market, Clinton, NJ
- Flemington Farmers’ Market, Dvoor Farm, Flemington, NJ





- High Bridge Farmers' Market, High Bridge, NJ
- Stangl Factory Market, Flemington, NJ
- Summit Farmers' Market, Summit, NJ

#### **Farm Management Systems**

- Cooperative Extension of Hunterdon County, Flemington, NJ
- Farmers Insurance, Flemington, NJ
- Farm Family Insurance, Washington, NJ
- Farm Credit East, Lebanon, NJ
- Natural Resource Conservation Service, Pittstown, NJ
- Rutgers University Snyder Research Farm, Pittstown, NJ

#### **Farm Supplies** (fertilizer, pesticide, feed, seed, equipment, parts, etc.)

- Horsemen's Outlet, Lebanon, NJ
- Neshanic Farm, Home and Garden Supply, Neshanic Station, NJ
- Mendham Garden Supply, Annandale, NJ
- Stephan Farm & Horse Supply, Long Valley, NJ
- Tractor Supply, Washington, NJ

#### **Feed**

- Sergeantsville Grain & Feed, Sergeantsville, NJ
- Schaefer Farms
- Somerset Grain & Feed, Bernardsville, NJ
- The Tack Room, Pittstown, NJ

#### **Fencing**

- Amwell Fence, Ringoes, NJ
- Eagle Fence and Supply, Branchburg, NJ
- The Fence Company, Ringoes, NJ
- New Holland Fence, New Holland, PA
- Rudl Fencing, Glen Gardner, NJ
- Superior Fencing and Hole Drilling, Lebanon, NJ
- Town and Country Fencing, Lebanon, NJ
- York Fence, Hillsboro, NJ

#### **Fertilizer**

- Crop Production Services, Hampton, NJ
- Growmark FS Inc., Bloomsbury, NJ

#### **Livestock Auctions**

- Livestock Cooperative Auction, Hackettstown, NJ
- New Holland Livestock Auction, New Holland, PA



#### **Pond Construction**

- Country Acres Landscaping, Stockton, NJ
- Landcraft, Inc., Clinton, NJ

#### **Processing Facilities**

- Arctic Foods, Washington, NJ
- Dealaman Enterprises, Warren, NJ
- Frigit Freeze, Milford, NJ
- Leigh Valley Meats, Belfast, PA
- V. Roche & Son, Whitehouse Station, NJ
- Springfield Meats, Richlandtown, PA

#### **Well Drilling**

- Samuel Stothoff Company, Flemington, NJ

### **D. OTHER AGRICULTURAL RELATED INDUSTRIES**

#### **Fertilizers, Lime, Chemicals**

- Crop Production Services, Pittstown, NJ

#### **Financial Services**

- First Pioneer Farm Credit, ACA, Lebanon, NJ
- Pennington Sales and Service, Pennington, NJ

#### **Hoof Trimmers and Farriers**

- Dan Bias, High Bridge, NJ
- Bedminster Forge, Bedminster, NJ

#### **Livestock Artificial Insemination**

- Select Sire Power, Inc.

#### **Agricultural Testing Labs**

- Rutgers Soil Testing Laboratory, Milltown, NJ

#### **Livestock Supplies**

- Premier Supplies, Washington, IA



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**Manure Removal**

- Pine View Trucking, Nottingham, PA

**Poultry**

- Clearview Stock Farm & Hatchery, Gratz, PA
- Kuhl Corporation, Flemington, NJ

**Seed Suppliers**

- Belle Meade Co-Op, Belle Meade, NJ
- Johnny's Selected Seeds, Albion, ME

**Sheep Shearers**

- Christian Bench, Annandale, NJ
- Rebecca Gunther, Hillsborough, NJ

**Custom Slaughter Houses**

- Dealaman Enterprises, Inc., Warren, NJ
- Springfield Meats, Richlandtown, PA

**Large Animal Veterinarians**

- Dr. Reynolds, Pittstown, NJ
- Elbert & Stultz, Hopewell, NJ

**Organic Service Providers**

- Johnny's Selected Seeds, Winslow, ME



### III. LAND USE PLANNING CONTEXT

#### A. STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

In 1986, the New Jersey Legislature passed the New Jersey State Planning Act, which created the State Planning Commission and required the preparation and adoption of the State Plan. The first State Plan, adopted in 1992, was the product of a statewide planning process, which involved counties and municipalities and formulated a series of policies intended on shaping growth within New Jersey. The first major update and revision of the 1992 State Plan was initiated in 1997 and culminated in the adoption of the second State Plan on March 1, 2001. The policies and objectives set forth in the State Plan include a number of recommendations for promoting and preserving the agricultural industry and farmland. As illustrated below, Readington's support of agriculture and farmland preservation planning efforts are consistent with the vision, goals, policies and strategies of the 1986 State Planning Act and the 2001 State Plan. Readington has, and will continue to implement local agricultural land use policies that are consistent with the State Plan, as appropriate to the existing local character of Readington, and in the context of its overall land use policies.

#### Statewide Policies

The State Plan contains a series of statewide goals, strategies and policies that are supportive of the Township's effort to preserve rural character and agriculture. The following Statewide policies directly address the need for preservation of agriculture and farmland:

**15. Agriculture<sup>2</sup>**

*Promote and preserve the agricultural industry and retain farmland by coordinating planning and innovative land conservation techniques to protect agricultural viability while accommodating beneficial development and economic growth necessary to enhance agricultural vitality and by educating residents on the benefits and the special needs of agriculture.*

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<sup>2</sup> 2001 State Plan, 147 – 160.



***Sustainable Agriculture and Comprehensive Planning:***

***Policy 1 Agricultural Land Retention Program Priorities***

*Funds for farmland retention should be given priority in the following order, unless a county or municipal farmland preservation plan has been prepared and approved by the State Agriculture Development Committee (in which case, priority shall be based on said plan):*

- (1) Rural Planning Area;*
- (2) Fringe and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas;*
- (3) Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas.*

***Policy 2 Preservation of the Agricultural Land Base***

*Consider the expenditure of public funds for preservation of farmland as an investment in public infrastructure and thereby emphasize the public's interest in maintaining long-term agricultural viability.*

***Policy 3 Coordinated Planning***

*Coordinate planning efforts of all levels of government to ensure that policies and programs promote agriculture.*

***Policy 4 New Development***

*Plan and locate new development to avoid negative impacts on agriculture.*

***Policy 5 Creative Planning and Design Techniques***

*Encourage creative land planning and design through tools such as clustering, phasing and density transfers, purchase and donation of development rights, agricultural enterprise zones and districts and the provision of self-contained community wastewater treatment systems to serve Centers, to accommodate future growth in ways that maintain the viability of agriculture as an industry, while avoiding conflict with agricultural uses.*

***Policy 6 Agricultural Water Needs***

*Include consideration of the water needs of the agricultural industry in water supply planning at all levels of government.*



***Agriculture and Economic Development:***

***Policy 7 Provision of Capital Facilities***

*Provide adequate capital facilities including grain storage and food processing facilities to enhance agriculture in rural areas.*

***Policy 8 Access to Capital***

*Improve access to capital funds, including rural revolving loan funds and rural venture capital networks, operating funds and portfolios that reduce the reliance on land as an asset for collateral or retirement.*

***Policy 9 Enhancing the Agricultural Industry***

*Promote economic development that supports the agricultural industry on local, county and statewide levels.*

***Policy 10 Diversify the Rural Economy***

*Promote beneficial economic growth that recognizes the need to provide the essential facilities and infrastructure to diversify the rural economy. Provide opportunities for business expansion, off-farm employment, on-farm income generating enterprises such as agricultural-related educational or recreational activities and environmental activities such as leaf composting.*

***Policy 11 Enhance Agricultural Marketing***

*Enhance marketing programs to promote the sale of New Jersey agricultural products.*

***Policy 12 Simplify the Regulatory Process***

*Adapt the permitting, licensing and land use planning and regulation processes to be sensitive to agricultural needs to enhance the industry and to facilitate new agricultural development.*

***Policy 13 Local Ordinances and Building Codes Sensitive to Agricultural Use***

*Promulgate local ordinances and state building code and fee criteria which are sensitive to the special purposes of agricultural construction and seasonal use.*

***Policy 14 Right to Farm***

*Coordinate actions of state and local government to encourage the maintenance of agricultural production by protecting farm operations from*



*interference and nuisance actions when recognized methods or practices are applied and to ensure that the numerous social, economic and environmental benefits of agriculture serves the best interests of all citizens in the state.*

***Policy 15 Aquaculture***

*Recognize aquaculture as an agricultural activity. (Aquaculture means the propagation, rearing and subsequent harvesting of aquatic organisms with the need for an approximate source of water in controlled or selected environments and the subsequent processing, packing and marketing.)*

***Agriculture and Environmental Protection:***

***Policy 16 Promote Agricultural Management Practices***

*Encourage the use of agricultural management practices to ensure sustainable and profitable farming while protecting natural resources.*

***Policy 17 Incorporate Agricultural Land in Recycling of Organic Materials***

*Use appropriate agricultural lands for the recycling of non-farm generated biodegradable and organic materials.*

***Human Resources:***

***Policy 18 Housing Supply and Financing***

*Use federal and State funding to expand the supply of decent, safe and reasonably priced housing that will benefit those employed in agriculture.*

***Policy 19 Vocational and Technical Training***

*Create and expand access to training and technical assistance for agriculture and agriculture related businesses.*

***Policy 20 Agricultural Education***

*Create and expand agricultural education and leadership opportunities through basic skills training, and vocational and entrepreneurial training on the secondary, county college and university levels.*

***Policy 21 Encourage Young and First Time Farmers***

*Coordinate federal, state and local financial incentives and tax and regulatory policies to encourage more individuals to enter the agricultural industry.*



***Policy 22 Promote the Value of Agriculture***

*Educate New Jersey residents on the economic and environmental value of sustainable agriculture in New Jersey and its important contribution to the State's quality of life.*

***Policy 23 Agro-tourism and Eco-tourism***

*Expand opportunities for agro-tourism and eco-tourism.*

**State Planning Areas**

The State Plan delineates a series of *planning areas* that are based on the natural and built characteristics of sub-areas within New Jersey. The planning areas are:

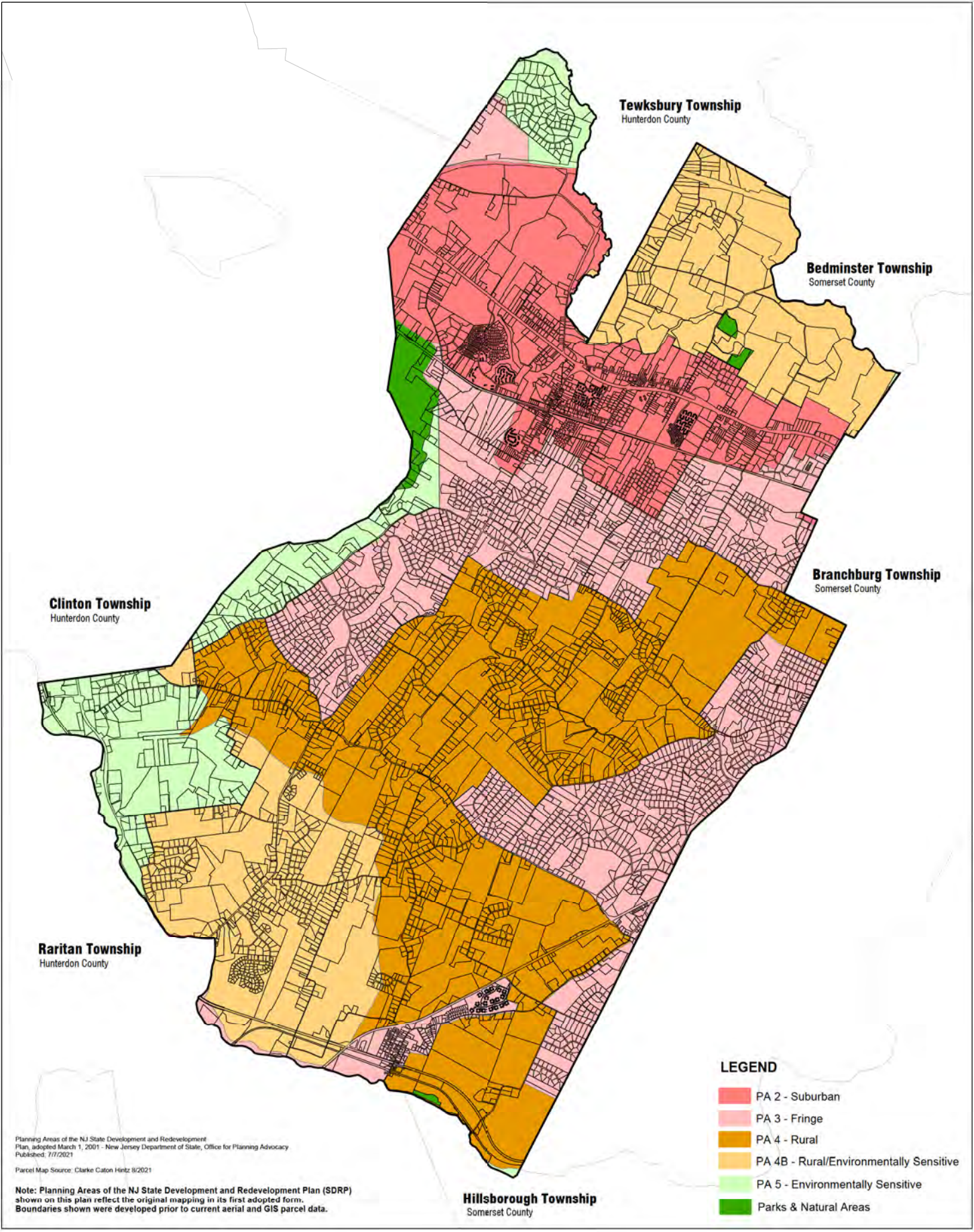
- PA1 Metropolitan Planning Area
- PA2 Suburban Planning Area
- PA3 Fringe Planning Area
- PA4 Rural Planning Area
- PA4B Rural/Environmentally Sensitive
- PA5 Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area

The designations are listed in descending order from the most developed condition to the least developed conditions. They also reflect the State's vision for the future development of those areas.

**State Plan Cross Acceptance Process**

From 2004 through 2007, the Township participated with Hunterdon County in the State Plan Cross Acceptance process. Readington Township was part of county planning region 5 that also included Clinton Town, Clinton Township, Lebanon Borough, High Bridge Borough, Franklin Township, and Union Township. Several significant planning area changes are recommended for Readington including completely removing the PA 4 and PA 2 designations from the Township. The PA 2 designation would be replaced with a combination of PA 3, PA 4B, and PA 5, the goal being to better protect environmentally sensitive areas, limit additional growth outside of the identified Whitehouse Station Community Development boundary, and provide a buffer from more intensely developed areas to the east in Branchburg Township. In addition, the Township has proposed the villages of Whitehouse Station and Three Bridges as centers.





Planning Areas of the NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan, adopted March 1, 2001 - New Jersey Department of State, Office for Planning Advocacy  
Published: 7/7/2021

Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 9/2021

**Note: Planning Areas of the NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) shown on this plan reflect the original mapping in its first adopted form. Boundaries shown were developed prior to current aerial and GIS parcel data.**

**LEGEND**

- PA 2 - Suburban
- PA 3 - Fringe
- PA 4 - Rural
- PA 4B - Rural/Environmentally Sensitive
- PA 5 - Environmentally Sensitive
- Parks & Natural Areas



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 Architecture  
 Planning  
 Landscape Architecture



## Plan Endorsement

The State Planning Commission revised the Guidelines for Plan Endorsement in 2010. Achieving Plan Endorsement status is a comprehensive process that results in an official determination that a municipal plan is consistent with the State Plan. The process seeks to coordinate the planning initiatives of the state with local plans. The Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) explains that the benefits of obtaining plan endorsement are financial and technical assistance from the State to help implement an endorsed plan. The Township will need to reevaluate its planning priorities to determine when Plan Endorsement should be undertaken and what planning activities are in the best interest of the Township.

### B. SPECIAL RESOURCE AREAS

Readington is contiguous to, but not in the Highlands Region. Readington is not affected by any Special Resource Area designation.

### C. MUNICIPAL MASTER PLAN AND ZONING REGULATIONS

Readington's Master Plan and related zoning regulations provide strong support for farmland preservation and the continuation of agriculture as an industry in the Township. The Township's goals and policies supporting farmland preservation and agriculture in recent Master Plan documents are summarized below:

#### 1990 Master Plan<sup>3</sup>

This plan included specific policies regarding farmland and open space preservation that were used in the development of the Land Development Ordinance. The following policy specifically encourages retention of farmland as an agricultural business:

##### *Farmland Preservation*

*Encourage retention of farmland as an agricultural business, to the extent practical, adding diversity to the Township's economic and local job base. Investigate creation of "farmettes", agricultural districting or other techniques to accomplish this policy. p.7*

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<sup>3</sup> Readington Township Planning Board. *Master Plan and Reexamination Report*. Adopted January 22, 1990



## 1998 Master Plan Amendments<sup>4</sup>

The 1998 Master Plan amendments reflected the policies of the Township that were evolving in response to the threats to open space and farmland preservation posed by increased development pressures. This update strengthened Readington's preservation and conservation agenda by increasing minimum lot sizes and open space set-asides in the majority of the Township lands. The policy basis for the changes in the land use plan and strategies for implementation, are illustrated in the following excerpts:

### Goals & Policies

#### *Agricultural Preservation*

*Goal: Preserve farmlands and encourage their continued use recognizing that farming is an important component of the economy of the township, the region, and the state, and that agricultural lands are an irreplaceable natural resource and a key element of the Township's rural character.*

*Policies: Coordinate local agricultural land use preservation efforts with those of the state and the county and with those of adjoining municipalities.*

*Preserve large agricultural areas free from the intrusion of residential and other uses by zoning for appropriate intensity of use, requiring that new residential units in agricultural areas be clustered and by acquiring development rights and open space in agricultural areas. p. II-1*

*Opportunities to preserve diminishing farmland should continue to be actively pursued. Hunterdon County is the second fastest growing county in the state, with a population growth rate of 23.4% between 1980 and 1990, which has been continuing through the 1990's. Readington's population increased at a comparable rate over the same ten years, to a population of 13,400 in 1990. Moreover, Readington has seen its population growth through the latter part of the decade exceed projections made as recently as 1990. It is estimated that the population today is greater than 17,000. Building permits issued in the four-year period from 1990 through 1993, inclusive, total 282. Building permits for the four-year period from 1994-*

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<sup>4</sup> Readington Township Planning Board. *Amendment to the Master Plan*. Adopted on November 23, 1998.



*1997, inclusive, totaled 808. With this accelerated growth comes the accelerated loss of valuable farmland. P. V-26*

*Consequently, over the past 16 years Readington Township has been losing farmland at a rate 40% higher than that of Hunterdon County. This is not surprising considering Readington's location at the eastern edge of the County and its convenient accessibility to the metropolitan areas to the east via I-78, NJ Route 22 and I-202. Residential Development pressure has been more pronounced in Readington than in most other Hunterdon County Municipalities. P. V-27*

### **Parks, Recreation & Open Space**

This plan element of the master plan identifies several strategies for preserving open space and farmland. These include:

#### ***Farmland Preservation Program***

*Where appropriate, farmland preservation is an excellent method of contributing to open space preservation by preserving natural vistas and providing a buffer for other preserved areas. Farmland preservation results in larger parcels of appropriate size, location, and soil quality being dedicated to agricultural use. P. VIII-15*

#### ***Purchase of Land in Fee***

*When land comes up for sale at a reasonable price, fee simple acquisition by the Township should be considered. A larger portion of the parcel can be deed restricted for agriculture and resold into private ownership. The farmland preservation easement on a larger farm parcel would be held by the Township for resale to the Hunterdon County Agricultural Development Board, the farm which has been deed restricted to agriculture could be sold back into private ownership, and the smaller portion of the parcel in appropriate locations, for instance along a stream corridor, could be retained by the Township for conservation purposes or passive recreation purposes. P. VIII-15*



## 2001 Amendment to the Master Plan

The 2001 Amendment to the Master Plan, adopted on July 9, 2001, included a Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Element, replacing the 1998 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Element. This element continues to endorse farmland preservation efforts within the Township as follows:

*Where appropriate, farmland preservation is an excellent method of contributing to open space preservation by preserving natural vistas and providing a buffer for other preserved areas. Farmland preservation results in larger parcels of appropriate size, location and soil quality being dedicated to agricultural use. Readington should continue to participate with the Hunterdon County Agricultural Development Board and the NJ State Agriculture Development Committee to plan and seek means to preserve agricultural lands. P.VIII-42*

## 2002 Master Plan Amendment

In May of 2002, the Planning Board adopted an amendment to the Master Plan to expand the AR land use category and recommending a zone change to the Township Committee. The 2002 Master Plan Amendment noted that the proposed expansion of the AR land use category would increase consistency with the State Plan by helping to retain open space and farmland within the PA4 Rural and PA4B Rural/Environmentally Sensitive planning areas.

## 2009 Master Plan Amendment

In June, 2009, the Planning Board adopted a comprehensive update of the Master Plan, including a Statement of Objectives, Principles, Assumptions, Policies, and Standards, Land Use Plan, Conservation Plan, and Utility Service Plan. The importance of agricultural preservation to the Township was codified in the Statement of Objectives, Principles, Assumptions, Policies, and Standards first objective:

1. *Agricultural Preservation*

*Goal: Preserve farmlands and encourage their continued use recognizing that farming is an important component of the economy of the Township, the region, and the State, and that agricultural lands are an irreplaceable natural resource and a key element of the Township's rural character.*



*Policies: Coordinate local agricultural land use preservation efforts with those of the State and the County and with those of adjoining municipalities.*

*Preserve large agricultural areas free from the intrusion of residential and other uses by zoning for appropriate intensity of use, requiring that new residential units in agricultural areas be clustered and by acquiring development rights and open space in agricultural areas.*

The 2009 Land Use Plan also recommended an expansion of the Agricultural Residential zoning district and a decrease in permitted residential densities in order to comply with NJDEP standards for nitrate dilution in unsewered areas. The 2009 Land Use Plan also recommended the creation of two new residential zoning districts – the Special Resource Residential (SRR) district and the Hamlet Residential (HR) District.

### **2014 Reexamination of the Master Plan and Subsequent Ordinance Amendments**

While carrying forward the bulk of the recommendations contained within the 2009 Master Plan Reexamination Report, the 2014 Reexamination report identified new factors contributing towards refinement and modification of land use policies. This led to the adoption of four amendments to the Land Development Ordinance.

Ordinance #26-2014 modified the Village Hospitality Zone to recognize that the remainder of the zone would not be developed in conjunction with the Ryland Inn redevelopment. Ordinance #27-2014 made modifications to the SC-4 Senior Citizen Overlay Zone, and to reflect a zone boundary change that had previously been adopted that clarified the relationship between the Village Resident and Village Commercial district in a portion of Whitehouse Station. Ordinance #05-2015 amended the boundaries of the AR and B Zone on the Walmart property, adding 4.3+/- acres to the B Zone, to be consistent with a previous expansion of the Future Sewer Service Area (FSSA) and to foster a more viable use of the currently existing commercial use. Ordinance #07-2015 was drafted to provide for additional non-residential options for development within the RO zone, recognizing that Merck's headquarters building was being vacated. This amendment to the RO Research Office added "medical offices" and "hotels" as permitted uses, provided for additional accessory uses (conference centers, restaurants, bars and health/recreation) to hotels, and provided for multiple permitted uses to be developed together on lots over 10 acres.



## 2016 Master Plan Amendment

While carrying forward the bulk of the recommendations contained within the 2014 Master Plan Reexamination Report, the 2016 Reexamination report identified new factors contributing towards refinement and modification of land use policies, which included:

- Amending the zoning district, land use plan and utility plan status of the Ryland Developers, LLC property pursuant to a settlement of litigation;
- Considering options to amend or replace the ROM-1 zone in Whitehouse/Whitehouse Station to enhance opportunities for limited local business expansion in order to maintain viability of such businesses and strengthen Readington’s economic base;
- Amending the zoning district of the site of the approved, mixed-use development called “Shoppes at the Farm” (Hartman) on Route 22 at Coddington Road, and provide alternative zoning for the adjacent corner property to complement the approved mixed-use development;
- Resolving various site-specific amendments to the Utility Plan Element and Upper Raritan Water Quality Management Plan;
- Maintaining and updating planning and programming for provision of affordable housing in the context of the Courts taking jurisdiction over compliance.

## 2018 Open Space Element of the Readington Township Master Plan

The Open Space Plan was adopted on February 13, 2018. It replaces the 2001 Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan Element, and amends the 1990 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Element of the Master Plan. This Open Space Plan reiterates earlier versions of the Open Space Plan and the Township’s commitment to farmland preservation.

*Where appropriate, farmland preservation is an excellent method of contributing to open space preservation by preserving natural vistas and providing a buffer for other preserved areas. Farmland preservation results in larger parcels of appropriate size, location and soil quality being dedicated*



*to agricultural use. Readington should continue to participate with the Hunterdon County Agricultural Development Board and the NJ State Agriculture Development Committee to plan and seek means to preserve agricultural lands.*

A copy of the Township’s current zoning map, which reflects zoning updates adopted as of October 16, 2017, is attached. As indicated in the following table, minimum lot sizes for conventional single family development under current zoning range from 10 acres in the SRR zone to 20,000 sf. in the VR zone. However, a key strategy employed by the Township to preserve land has been to permit “cluster” subdivisions in the RR, former SSR, and AR land use categories. This zoning technique allows for smaller lot sizes (1.5-2 acres), but requires set-asides of preserved land. (See Section III.F.2, below for additional detail regarding the Township’s clustering provisions.) Through this technique and the targeted use of State, County, and local funds, Readington has had great success in preserving land for farmland and open space. Readington will continue using clustering for land preservation.

Table 7: Minimum Lot Sizes for Conventional Single Family Development (SFD)	
Residential Zone*	Minimum Lot Size (Conventional SFD)
Special Resource Residential (SRR)	10 acres
Agricultural Residential (AR)	8 acres
Rural Residential (RR)	5 acres
Hamlet Residential (HR)	2 acres
R-1 Residential (R-1)	1 acre
Village Residential (VR)	20,000 sf.
<i>*PND and SCR residential zones not included due to minimal development potential</i>	
<i>Source: Readington Township Land Development Ordinance</i>	

### Consistency with Hunterdon County Growth Management Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan

Hunterdon County’s Growth Management Plan (GMP), adopted in December 2007, includes a number of policies and strategies that are intended to help achieve the County’s vision of greater land preservation and protection of rural character and natural resources. With regard to land preservation, strategies recommended in the GMP include adopting Right to Farm ordinances, and utilizing zoning strategies that incorporate Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), noncontiguous clustering and agricultural zoning provisions, and concentrating development into growth areas.





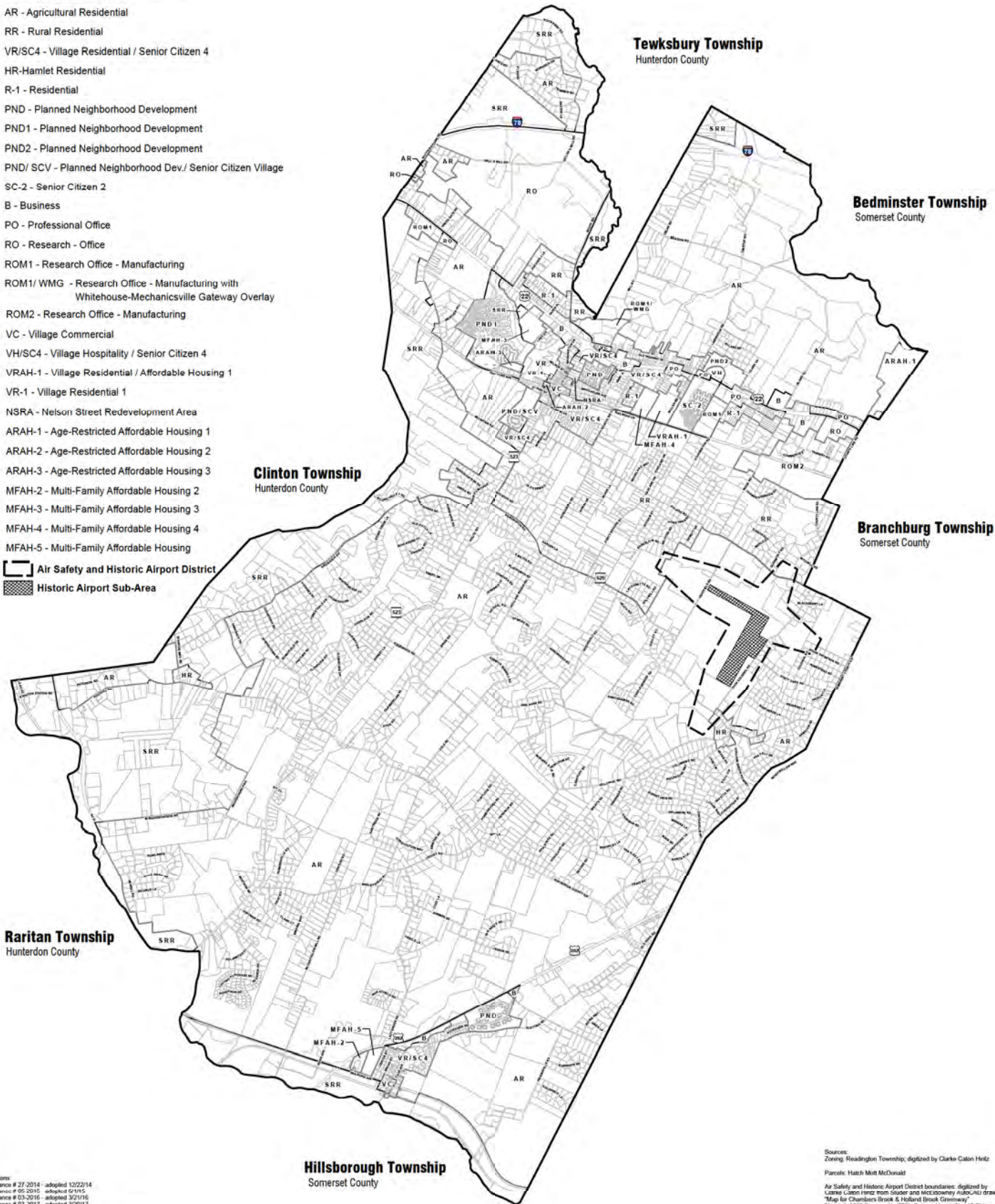
Clarke Caton Hintz

Similarly, the County's Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP), adopted in 2008, discusses the use of innovative planning techniques to preserve land, including lot size averaging, cluster zoning, and municipal and regional TDR programs. As discussed above, Readington has emphasized agricultural zoning that includes a mandatory cluster provision. More generally, the Township's zoning concentrates development into existing centers and growth areas, consistent with both the County GMP and State Plan.

**Legend**

**Zone**

- SRR - Special Resource Residential
- AR - Agricultural Residential
- RR - Rural Residential
- VR/SC4 - Village Residential / Senior Citizen 4
- HR-Hamlet Residential
- R-1 - Residential
- PND - Planned Neighborhood Development
- PND1 - Planned Neighborhood Development
- PND2 - Planned Neighborhood Development
- PND/ SCV - Planned Neighborhood Dev./ Senior Citizen Village
- SC-2 - Senior Citizen 2
- B - Business
- PO - Professional Office
- RO - Research - Office
- ROM1 - Research Office - Manufacturing
- ROM1/ WMG - Research Office - Manufacturing with Whitehouse-Mechanicsville Gateway Overlay
- ROM2 - Research Office - Manufacturing
- VC - Village Commercial
- VH/SC4 - Village Hospitality / Senior Citizen 4
- VRAH-1 - Village Residential / Affordable Housing 1
- VR-1 - Village Residential 1
- NSRA - Nelson Street Redevelopment Area
- ARAH-1 - Age-Restricted Affordable Housing 1
- ARAH-2 - Age-Restricted Affordable Housing 2
- ARAH-3 - Age-Restricted Affordable Housing 3
- MFAH-2 - Multi-Family Affordable Housing 2
- MFAH-3 - Multi-Family Affordable Housing 3
- MFAH-4 - Multi-Family Affordable Housing 4
- MFAH-5 - Multi-Family Affordable Housing 5
-  Air Safety and Historic Airport District
-  Historic Airport Sub-Area



Revisions:  
 Ordinance # 27-2014 - adopted 12/22/14  
 Ordinance # 05-2016 - adopted 6/1/16  
 Ordinance # 03-2016 - adopted 3/21/16  
 Ordinance # 03-2017 - adopted 3/20/17  
 Ordinance # 14-2017 - adopted 10/16/17

Sources:  
 Zoning: Readington Township, digitized by Clarke Caton Hintz  
 Parcels: Hatch Mott McDonald  
 Air Safety and Historic Airport District boundaries: digitized by  
 Clarke Caton Hintz from Stuber and McElDowney Inc./CAU drawing  
 "Map for Chambers Brook & Holland Brook Greenway"  
 March 3, 2009. Drawing No. 0761\_1, signed by H. Clay McElDowney

DRAFT

# Zoning Map

Readington Township, Hunterdon County, NJ    October 2021



Clarke Caton Hintz

- Architecture
- Planning
- Landscape Architecture



## D. CURRENT LAND USE TRENDS

Readington Township is the largest municipality in Hunterdon County, making up 10% of the County’s landmass. It is a sprawling Township with large, open, agricultural areas dominating the northeastern and southern regions, with suburban residential developments dominating areas in between. The pace of development during the last decade has slowed considerably, thanks to successful rural zoning and preservation efforts, but development pressure remains strong. All types of development are continuing. The following table summarizes existing land use by tax class within the Township:

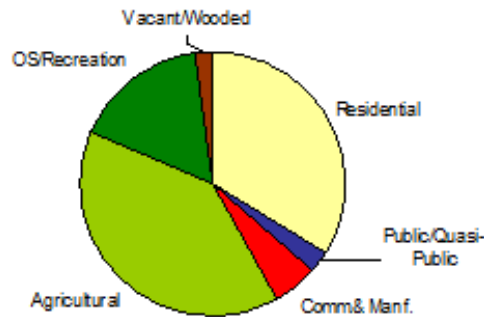
<b>Table 8: Existing Land Use by Tax Class</b>		
Existing Land Use by Tax Class	Acreage	% of Total Acreage
Single Family Detached Residential	9,792.1	33.52
Two Family and Greater Residential	340.7	1.17
Public/Utility	451.8	1.55
Church/Cemetery	82.9	0.28
Commercial/Office	1,112.7	3.81
Manufacturing/Industrial	248.6	0.85
Agricultural	12,336.2	42.23
Open Space/Recreation	3,755.9	12.86
Railroad	137.1	0.47
Vacant/Wooded (does not include agriculture)	953.2	3.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,211.2*</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>*Approximately 2.0 square miles of land not included in the table is comprised of roadways and public rights-of-way. Sources: 2021 Readington MOD IV Tax Assessment Records, June 2020 Open Space and Preserved Farmland Map.</i>		

As indicated in the table, agriculture is the largest land use in the Township. Single family detached residences, however, are a close second; indicating that, without the preservation efforts that the Township has undertaken, it could quickly overtake agriculture for the top position. Open space/Recreation represents the third largest land use followed by commercial/office uses, vacant land, public uses, two-family and greater residential. This pattern represents Readington’s strong heritage as a rural and agricultural community as well as the rapid increases in residential development that



have occurred over the last forty years. The most notable aspect of the existing land use is the large amount of land that is devoted to agricultural uses. More than 40% of the land in the Township falls into this category. The following chart illustrates existing land use in the Township, using somewhat broader categories of land use.

**Chart 7: Existing Land Use in Readington Township**



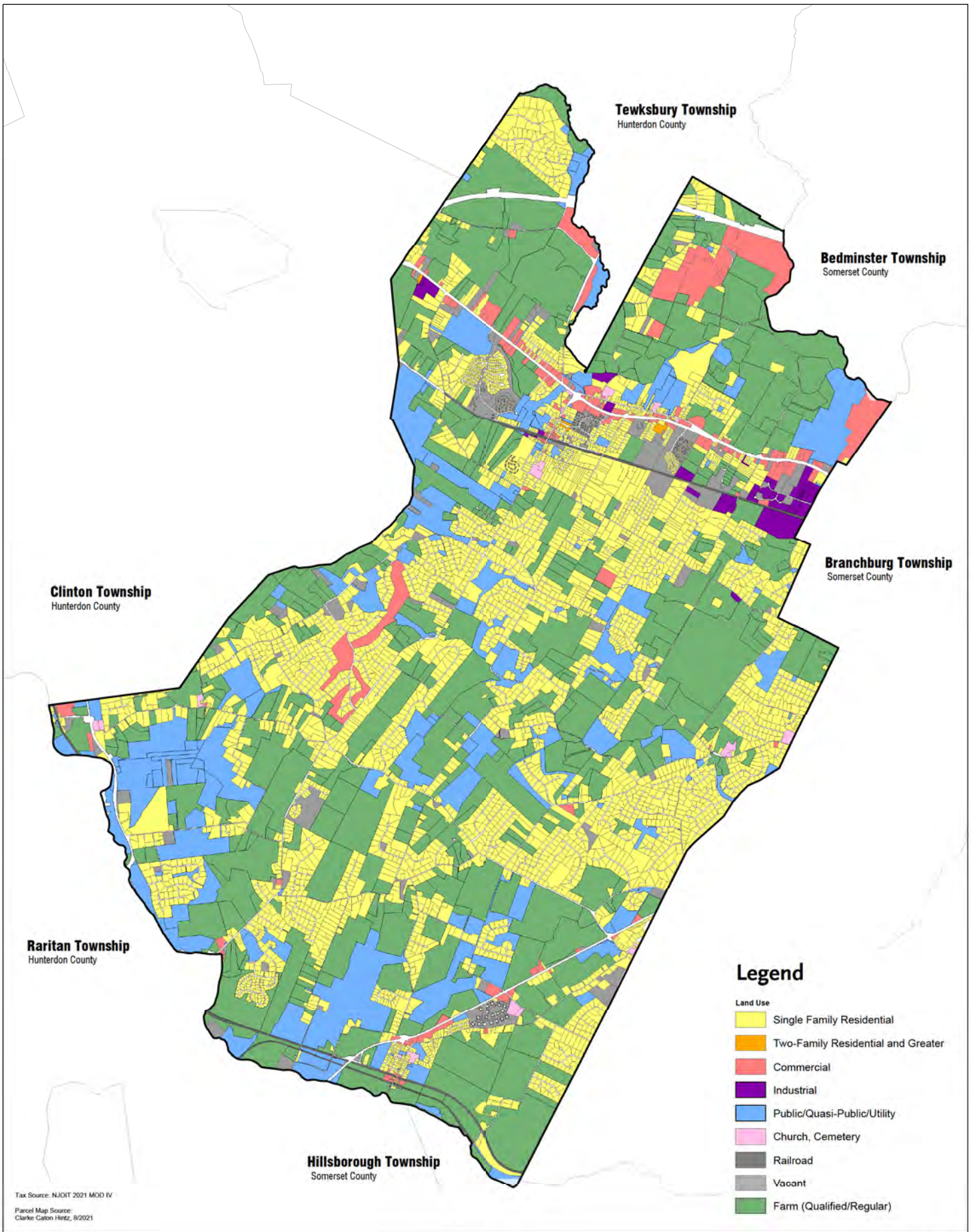
2021 Readington MOD IV Tax Assessment Records, June 2020 Open Space and Preserved Farmland Map.

Land Use/Land Cover (LU/LC) data from NJDEP provides additional information regarding existing land use in the Township that is based on interpretation of aerial photography. As shown in the following chart, agricultural land cover in Readington based on the LU/LC data has decreased by approximately 28% over the past several decades. Land use and land cover data was updated most recently by the NJDEP in 2015.

**Table 9: Land Use/Land Cover Data Trends, 1986 – 2015**

LU/LC Category	1986 (acres)	1995/97 (acres)	2002 (acres)	2012 (acres)	2015 (acres)	Change 1986 - 2015	
						Acres	%
Agricultural	10,731	8,929	8,138	7,785	7,736	-3,194.67	-27.9
Barren Land	209	163	104	35	79	-130	-62.2
Forest	9,615	9,324	9,821	9,324	9,366	-249	-2.6
Urban	7,573	9,726	10,138	9,658	9,705	2,132	28.2
Water	176	191	234	261	261	85	48.3
Wetlands	2,356	2,326	2,224	2,147	2,148	-208	-8.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30,660</b>	<b>30,660</b>	<b>30,660</b>	<b>29,252</b>	<b>29,252</b>		

Source: NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover Data, 1986, 1995/97, 2002, 2012, 2015





## **E. SEWER SERVICE AREAS/ PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY SERVICE AREAS**

Readington Township contains two primary public utility service areas. The main service area is located along the Route 22 Corridor, centered around the villages of Whitehouse and Whitehouse Station. The other is in the village of Three Bridges in the southeastern corner of the Township. In addition, the Hedgerow Estates subdivision on Route 523 near Darts Mill, receives public sewer service, and there are also several smaller, private treatment facilities that serve one site or a small contained area. The Township's existing sewer service areas are depicted in the map on the following page.

As discussed in the Township's June 2009 Utility Services Element, a disparity exists between the amount of available wastewater capacity and the development potential within the sewer service areas. In addition, projected densities in septic areas exceed DEP standards for nitrate dilution. Therefore, the element recommended that the Readington-Whitehouse sewer service area boundary be revised to remove parcels generally east of Coddington Road and west of Van Horne Drive that are not existing customers. Similarly, the element recommended that parcels be removed at the edge the Three Bridges sewer service area that are not serving existing customers. Subsequently, NJDEP proposed further reductions in the sewer service boundaries.

The 2016 Master Plan Amendment recommended that the Utility Service Plan Element be updated to include the following:

- To be consistent with the approved Hunterdon County Future Sewer Service Area and to reflect recent amendments to the Upper Raritan WQMP.
- To address any relevant changes to the State's Water Quality Management Rules.
- To address the outcome of the wastewater litigation, 388 Route 22 Readington Realty Holdings, LLC v. Readington, as appropriate;
- And to ensure that adequate public sanitary sewer is available to support the provision of low- and moderate- income housing.

The total area of the existing sewer service area is approximately 6,157 acres, whereas the NJDEP proposed sewer service areas contain approximately 3,159 acres. Active agricultural land (based on the 2015 LU/LC data) represents 9% (545 acres) of the existing sewer service area and 7% (218 acres) of the NJDEP proposed sewer service areas.



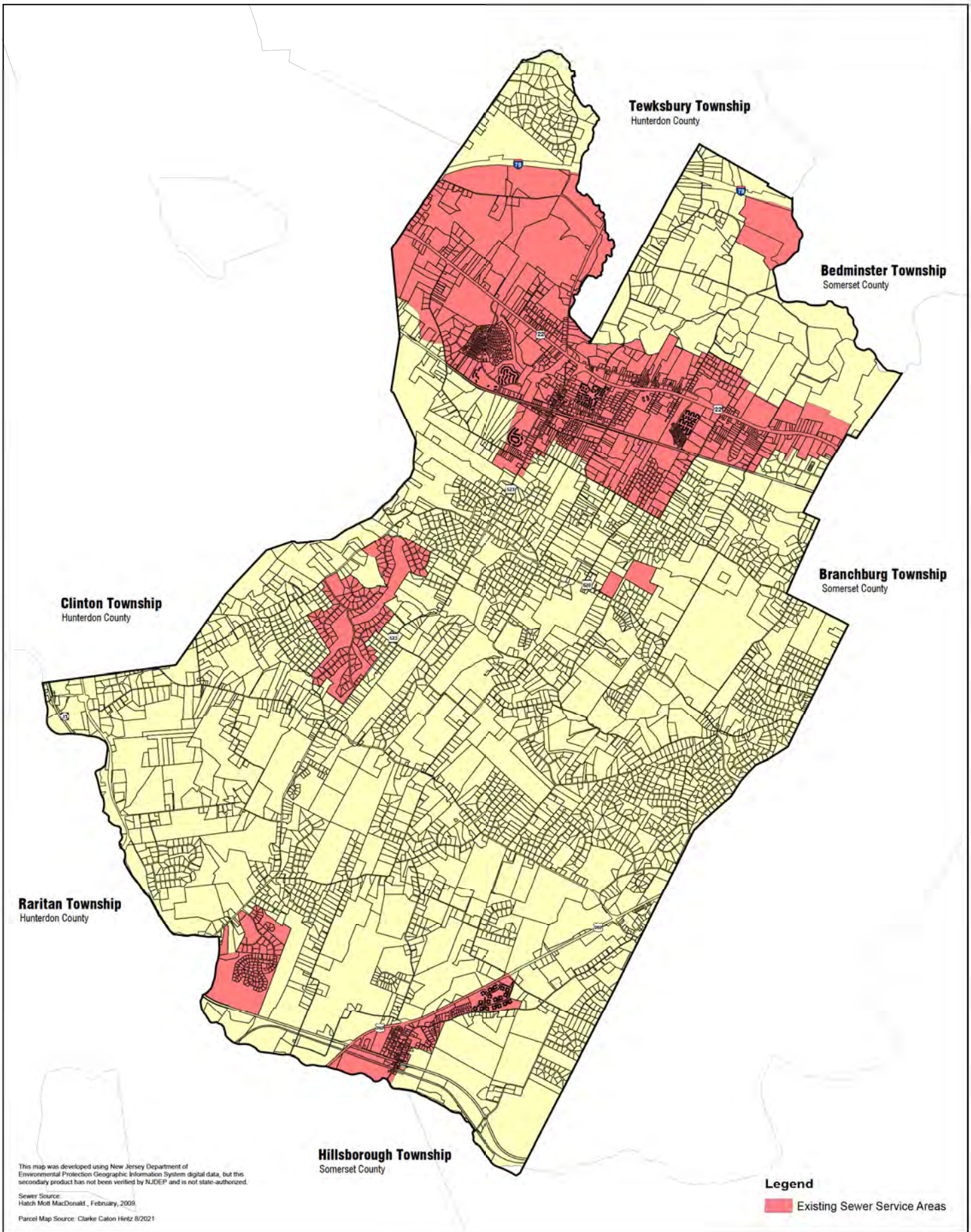
**Clarke Caton Hintz**

Additionally, there are two lots that have sewer service pending. Both of the lots are affordable housing sites, one along Route 22 in Whitehouse Station, the other along Route 202 in Three Bridges.

Readington has provided the Utility Service Element and other required information to the County for consideration in developing the County WMP. As the County WMP is completed, Readington's wastewater management plan will be treated as a specific chapter of the overall County WMP.

In terms of water supply, Readington contains two water franchise areas: the Route 22 Corridor area in the northern portion of the Township, and the Three Bridges area in the southeast area of the Township. Both areas are served by New Jersey American Water (formerly Elizabethtown Water Company.). A map showing the location of water franchise areas within Readington follows after the sewer service maps.

The proposed sewer service area map represents a reduction in sewer service area compared to the existing sewer service area resulting from environmentally constrained areas identified by NJDEP. The proposed Township and NJDEP sewer service areas are depicted on the map following the map of existing sewer service areas.



This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.

Sewer Source:  
Hatch Mott MacDonald, February, 2009.  
Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 8/2021

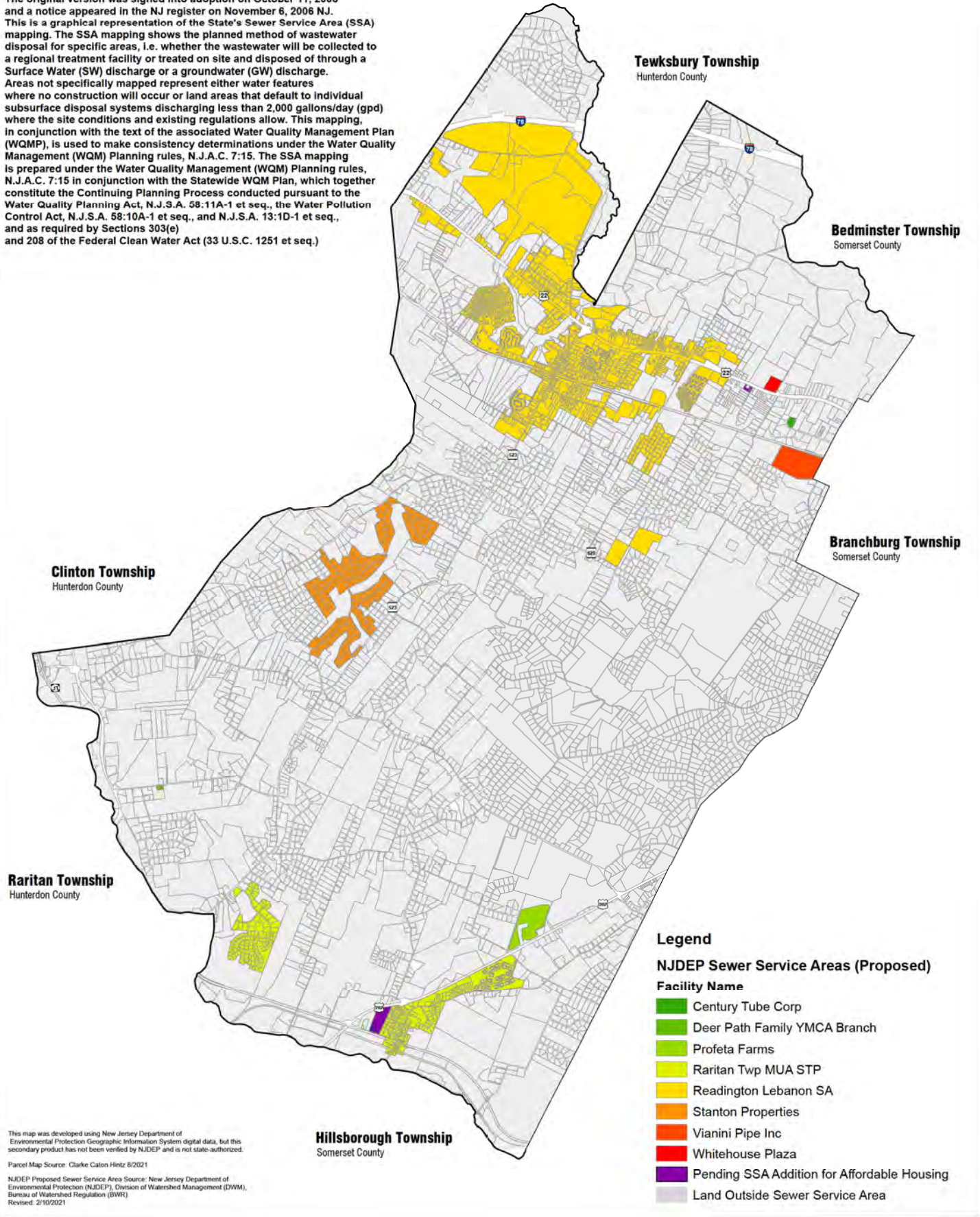
**Legend**  
 Existing Sewer Service Areas



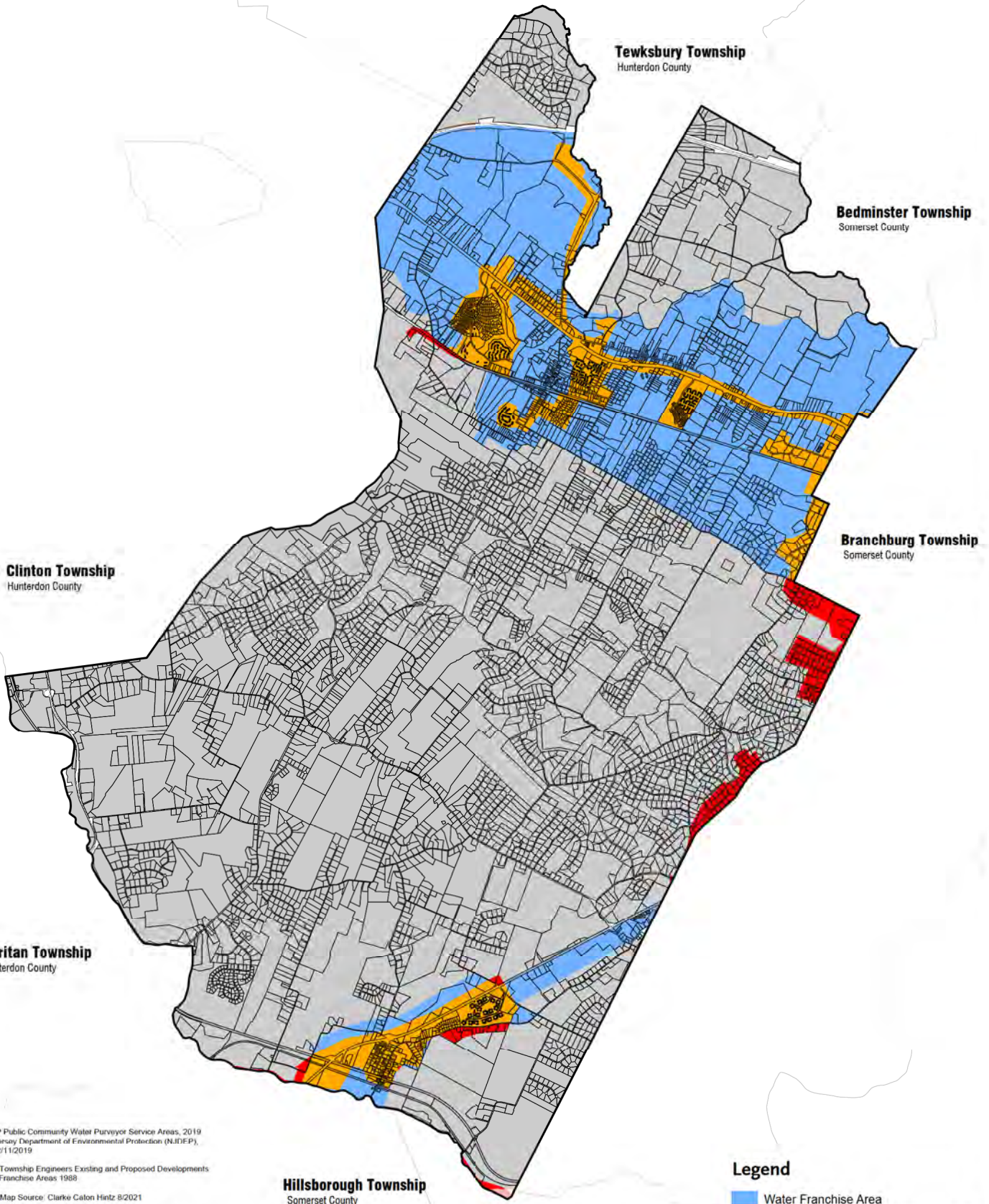


**Historical Information:**

The original version was signed into adoption on October 11, 2006 and a notice appeared in the NJ register on November 6, 2006 NJ. This is a graphical representation of the State's Sewer Service Area (SSA) mapping. The SSA mapping shows the planned method of wastewater disposal for specific areas, i.e. whether the wastewater will be collected to a regional treatment facility or treated on site and disposed of through a Surface Water (SW) discharge or a groundwater (GW) discharge. Areas not specifically mapped represent either water features where no construction will occur or land areas that default to individual subsurface disposal systems discharging less than 2,000 gallons/day (gpd) where the site conditions and existing regulations allow. This mapping, in conjunction with the text of the associated Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP), is used to make consistency determinations under the Water Quality Management (WQM) Planning rules, N.J.A.C. 7:15. The SSA mapping is prepared under the Water Quality Management (WQM) Planning rules, N.J.A.C. 7:15 in conjunction with the Statewide WQM Plan, which together constitute the Continuing Planning Process conducted pursuant to the Water Quality Planning Act, N.J.S.A. 58:11A-1 et seq., the Water Pollution Control Act, N.J.S.A. 58:10A-1 et seq., and N.J.S.A. 13:1D-1 et seq., and as required by Sections 303(e) and 208 of the Federal Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.)



This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.  
 Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 8/2021  
 NJDEP Proposed Sewer Service Area Source: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), Division of Watershed Management (DWM), Bureau of Watershed Regulation (BWR)  
 Revised: 2/10/2021



**Legend**

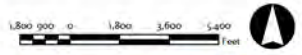
- Water Franchise Area
- Public Water Service + Franchise Area
- Public Water Service Areas

NJDEP Public Community Water Purveyor Service Areas, 2019  
 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP),  
 Date: 2/11/2019

RCBA Township Engineers Existing and Proposed Developments  
 Water Franchise Areas 1988

Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 8/2021

This map was developed using New Jersey Department of  
 Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this  
 secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.





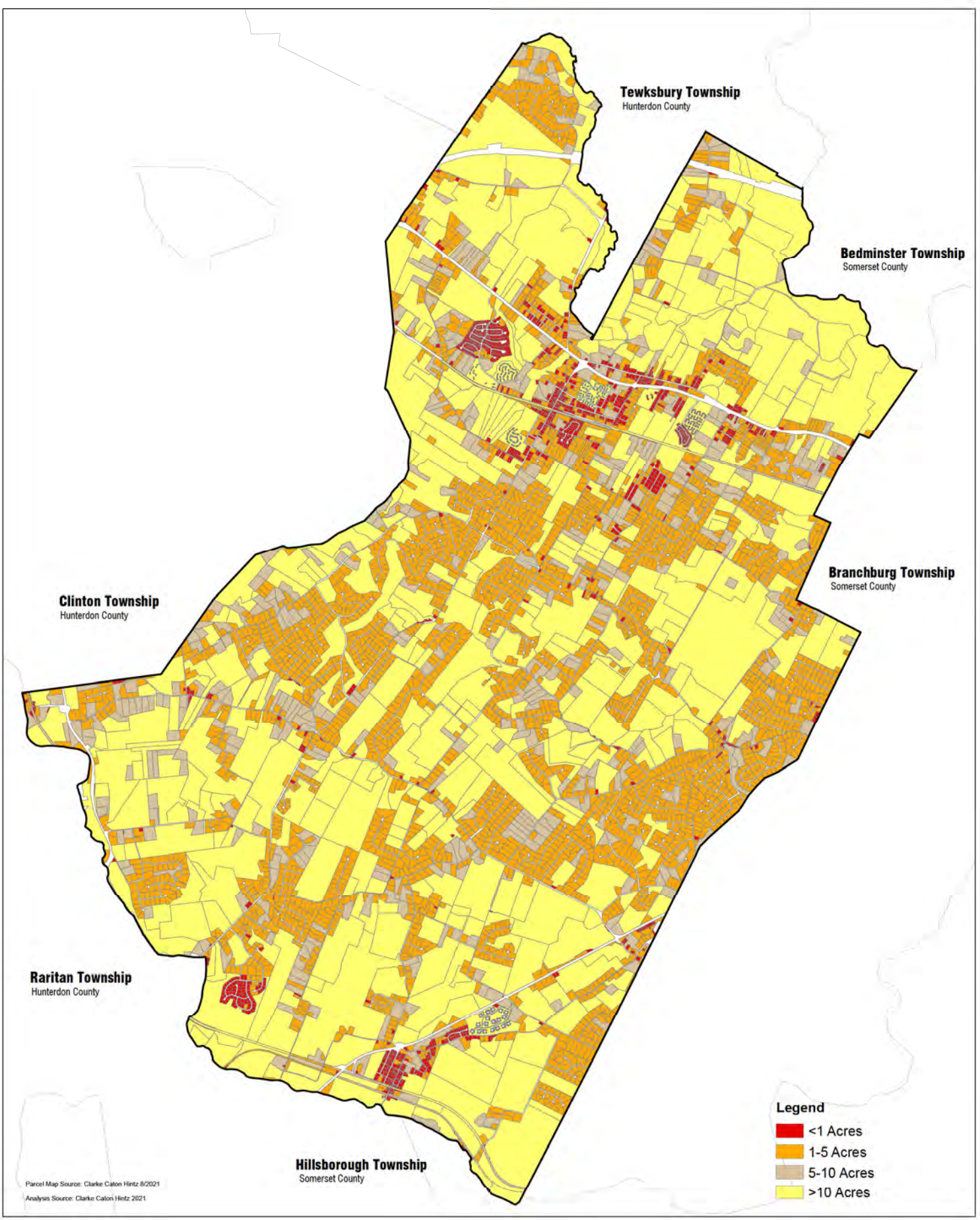
## F. READINGTON'S MASTER PLAN AND ZONING

### F.1 Lot Size Categories and Distribution

An analysis of the distribution of lot sizes in the Township revealed that a majority of the 6,816 lots in the Township or 55.69% are between one and five acres in size. Over one third or 35.88% are less than one acre in size. A total of 480 lots, or 7.04%, are between five and ten acres in total area. Lastly, 408 lots or 5.98% are over 10 acres in size. Among those, 37 lots are over 100 acres in size. The following chart summarizes this information:

Table 10: Lot Size Categories and Distribution		
Lot Size Category	Number of lots	Percentage of Total
< 1 acre	2,446	35.88%
1 acre – 5 acres	3,445	55.69%
5 acres – 10 acres	480	7.04%
10 acres - 100 acres	408	5.98%
>100 acres	37	0.54%
<b>Total:</b>	6,816	100.0%

Source: Clarke Caton Hintz analysis, 2020



Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 8/2021  
 Analysis Source: Clarke Caton Hintz 2021



## F.2 Innovative Planning Techniques

Readington Township was one of the first Townships in the State to use a mandatory cluster ordinance for the purpose of protecting agricultural land. From approximately 1984 through 1991, Readington first allowed, then required a mandatory 80% set aside of land for agriculture and open space in the designated ADA. Reluctance of developers to build package treatment plants for sewage treatment resulted in a variation of the cluster that set aside 67% of the land, and still relied on individual septic systems.

In 1998, the Township modified its mandatory cluster by creating the Agricultural Residential Zone, with a six-acre minimum lot size for subdivision of lots less than 30 acres, but which requires a 70% set aside for lots 30 acres and greater with a one and one half acre minimum lot size. In 2009, mandatory cluster zoning provisions were added to the Steep Slope Residential (SSR) and Rural Residential (RR) zones, and within the AR zone, the mandatory cluster provisions were revised to require an 80% set aside for lots 24 acres or greater. Under the mandatory cluster provisions, the resulting open space parcel is set aside entirely for agriculture and conservation (no housing is allowed). An open space parcel that is created by the cluster and which includes tillable land, donated to the Township, is leased to area farmers. This zoning technique has assured that large agricultural parcels that do develop are not entirely lost to agriculture.

Readington's ordinances do not allow lot size averaging, or TDR. The Township continues to investigate a limited non-contiguous cluster ordinance as a part of its smart growth planning; however, the Township is not interested in creating high density development.

## F.3 Buffer Requirements

Under §148-15.E(3)(m), Readington's Land Development Ordinance requires that "(a) minimum 50-foot-wide buffer shall be provided between residential uses and any land utilized for agricultural purposes. This buffer shall be deed restricted from development and shall contain at a minimum a staggered double row of evergreen plantings, five feet in height or equivalent as approved by the Planning Board."

## F.4 Discussion of Development Pressures and Farmland Value Trends

Readington Township is the most eastern Township in Hunterdon County and shares a long border with rapidly developing Somerset County. The Township continues to experience development pressure, although the pace of growth has slowed from the



previous decade. As indicated in the following table, a total of 294 residential building permits have been issued in the Township since 2010, representing an increase of approximately 4.7% over the 6,191 existing housing units in Readington as of the 2010 Census. This equates to an average increase of 33 new housing units per year, or a 0.5% annual increase over the existing housing stock. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of housing units in the Township increased from 5,794 to 6,191 units, representing approximately a 6.9% increase, or a growth rate of approximately 0.8% per year. In Hunterdon County, the 1,618 residential units added since 2010 represents an increase of approximately 3% over the 49,487 existing units as of the 2010 Census, or a .3% annual growth rate. This rate is lower than the 1.3% annual growth rate for housing experienced in the County between 2000 – 2010.

Table 11: Residential Building Permits, 2009 - 2018		
Year	Residential Building Permits	
	Readington Twp.	Hunterdon Co.
2010	17	97
2011	13	74
2012	39	91
2013	10	76
2014	59	223
2015	54	164
2016	28	230
2017	31	121
2018	38	316
Total	294	1618

*Source: NJ Dept. of Community Affairs*

In terms of non-residential growth, certificate of occupancy data compiled by the NJ Department of Community Affairs indicates that a total of 279,006 sf. of nonresidential development has been constructed in Readington from 2010 – 2018. Approximately 44% of the nonresidential growth has been office space, and another 33% has been storage uses.



<b>Table 12: Non-Residential Development in Readington Township, 2010 - 2018</b>			
Year	Certificates of Occupancy Issued (s.f.)		
	Office	Warehouse	Other*
2010	0	6,948	0
2011	0	14,720	1
2012	82,567	39,351	26,838
2013	16,717	512	0
2014	0	0	0
2015	8,001	29,594	27,978
2016	0	0	0
2017	6,200	0	1
2018	8,001	0	11,577
<b>Total</b>	<b>121,486</b>	<b>91,125</b>	<b>66,395</b>

*\* Includes assembly, educational, and retail uses. Source: The New Jersey Construction Reporter, Division of Codes and Standards, NJ Department of Community Affairs*

The development pressure in Readington has been slowed by the Township’s own aggressive open space and farmland preservation efforts. These efforts have reduced the supply of developable land and made that land that still is available for development more valuable. As indicated in the following table, the average per acre cost of farmland preservation has almost doubled since 1987, when the first farm was preserved in the Township. The average per acre cost of farmland preservation has decreased from a peak in 2010. The increase likely leveled off because of the recession in the national housing market, but it is expected that the demand and the price for open land in Readington will continue to increase, regardless, as supply is limited, and as there is a shortage of housing throughout the state. Additionally, the Covid-19 virus, and resulting economic crises, has led to increased housing prices. While the duration of the impacts on real estate prices caused by Covid-19 are unknown, it is likely that the price of land and housing in Hunterdon County and Readington has increased as a result of the crises.



Table 13: Average Cost Per Acre for Preserved Farmland Easement in Readington		
Year of Purchase	No. of Easements Purchased	Average Cost Per Acre
1987	1	\$7,813
1994	1	\$5,742
1995	2	\$8,191
1996	1	\$9,760
1998	1*	\$6,808
1999	2	\$6,951
2001	3	\$7,400
2002	2	\$11,251
2003	12	\$9,633
2004	5	\$9,070
2005	1	\$9,797
2006	4	\$15,013
2007	9	\$16,703
2009	2	\$21,425
2010	1	\$22,888
2011	1	\$17,506
2012	0	\$0
2013	2	\$18,217.51
2014	0	\$0
2015	1	\$12,000.15
2016	0	\$0
2017	2	\$12,744.37
2018	0	\$0
2019	0	\$0
2020	0	\$0

\* Does not include one farm donated in 1998.  
Source: SADC, Summary of Preserved Farmland, as of January 1, 2021. Does not include farms preserved through Green Acres, clustering or Township deed restrictions.

## G. DISCUSSION OF MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL TDR OPPORTUNITIES

Readington Township is considering Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) possibilities. Some sort of limited non-contiguous density transfer proposal may also be considered. Opportunities to use TDR are somewhat limited. Readington presently has





no unallocated gallonage in its sewer systems in the two sewer service areas, so receiving areas may have to rely on package treatment plants. With respect to regional opportunities, it is unlikely Readington would need to look to the region for TDR, since it is such a large and diverse municipality, it does have some land suitable and available for a very limited amount of development and also has more than sufficient open land that could be used as sending areas.

#### **IV. READINGTON'S FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

For over four decades, Readington Township has worked to protect its farmland and agriculture. Readington is proud of its historic role in the development of New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program. Readington was the first Township in New Jersey to hold a referendum to ask voters to bond for open space and farmland preservation. It adopted an Open Space Master Plan with a detailed agricultural element and which spoke to the need to preserve farmland as early as 1979. Since that time, the Township has continued to be at the forefront of the efforts to preserve farmland, using a variety of municipal initiatives including mandatory clustering, a municipal farmland easement option program, and most importantly, an aggressive municipal "pre-purchasing" program for both easements and land in fee for resale using municipal bonding. The result is 71 farms totaling 4,803 acres of farmland presently subject to a permanent farmland preservation deed restriction, and two farms under contract for preservation, bringing Readington's total of preserved farms to 73 and with 4,910.68 acres of farmland preserved.

##### **A. COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AREAS**

As discussed in the 2008 Hunterdon County Farmland Preservation Plan, the County Agriculture Development Board adopted Agriculture Development Areas (ADAs) in 1983 to satisfy minimum eligibility requirements for the statewide farmland preservation program, pursuant to the State Agriculture Retention and Development Act. The purpose of the ADAs is to identify where agricultural operations are likely to continue in the future and therefore be eligible for the farmland preservation program. The ADA is also used to identify areas in which agriculture is the preferred land use.

The state statutory criteria and purpose for designating an Agriculture Development Area is to encompass productive agricultural land which is currently in production or has 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 non-conforming use, identify an area that is reasonably free of suburban conflicting development and comprises not greater than 90 percent of the agricultural land mass of the county as well as incorporate any other characteristics deems appropriate by the County Agriculture Development Board (CADB.) (§2:76-1.3)

N.J.S.A. 4:1C-18, titled “Agricultural development area; recommendation and approval”, states that the CADB “shall document where agriculture shall be the preferred, but not necessarily the exclusive, use of land”. This indicates that land uses in the ADA are preferred to be agricultural.

§2:76-1.4 of the statute indicates factors that shall be considered by the Board in developing individual county ADA criteria. These factors include soils, current and anticipated local and use plans and regulations, farmland assessment status, anticipated approvals for non-agricultural development, accessibility to publicly funded water and sewer systems, compatibility with comprehensive and special purpose county and state plans, proximity and accessibility to major highways and interchanges, minimum size of an ADA, landowner sign-up, land within boroughs, towns or cities, inclusion of entire or partial lots and blocks, land ownership, natural and special features, as well as type and distribution of agriculture. In Hunterdon County, the county’s ADA criteria and map were based on a study of agriculture in the County prepared by the Middlesex-Somerset-Mercer Regional Study Council. Key components of the study were the mapping of productive agricultural operations and the location of prime and statewide important soils. Based upon the study, the CADB adopted criteria for the designation of ADAs and mapped them along physical boundaries or property lines.

In 1988, the basic building block of the County ADA criteria was changed from property lines and physical boundaries to tax blocks, making it easier to evaluate and maintain the database with the computer software available at that time. The 1988 ADA changes also reflected the new construction throughout the County; consequently, the land area in the ADA was reduced.

The county ADA criteria have changed little over the years and therefore the boundary has remained relatively unchanged. The county requirements are a minimum contiguous area of at least 250 acres; the predominance of prime or statewide important soils; land use that is reasonably free of non-farm development; and the absence of public sewers.

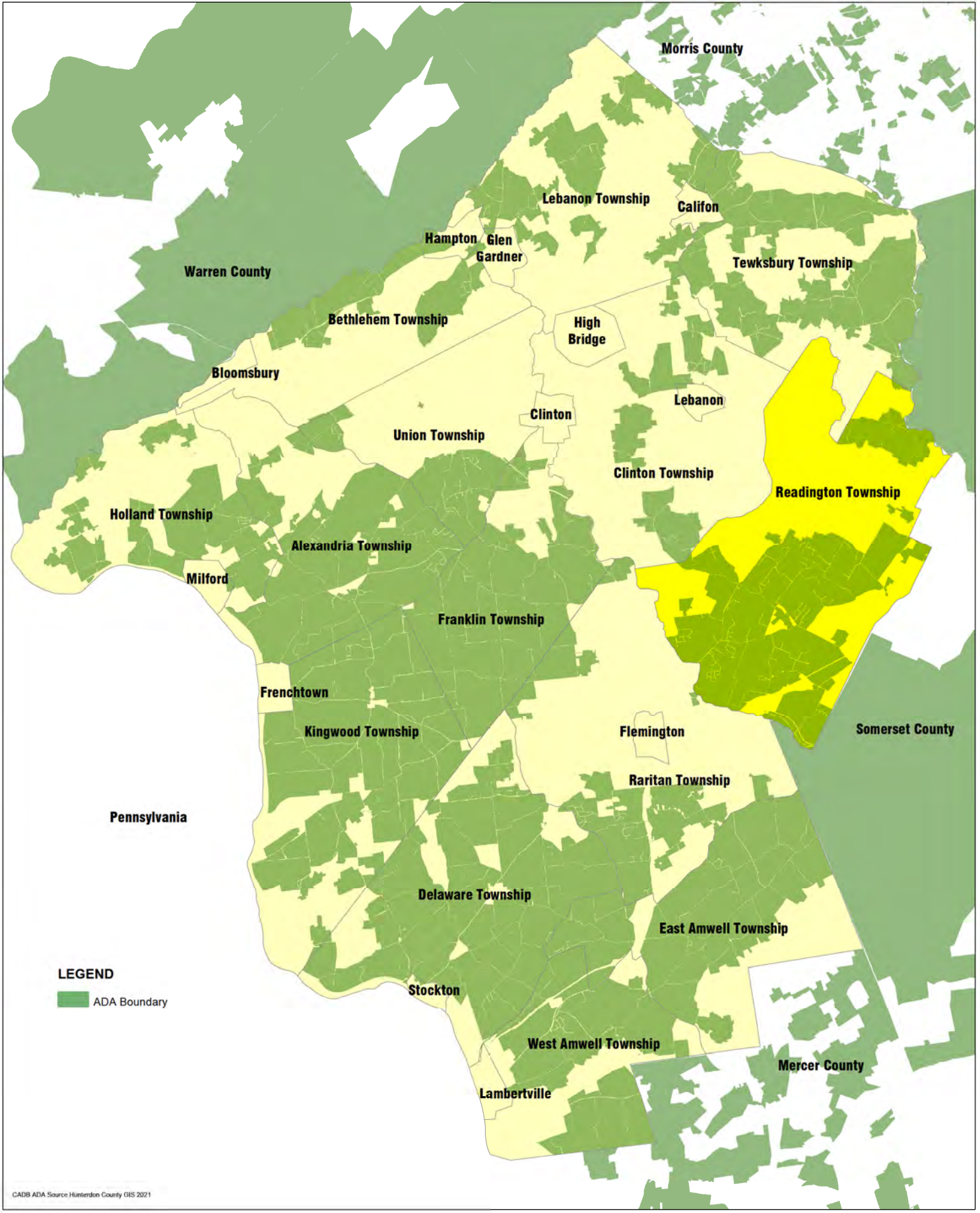
The Hunterdon County ADA map has been amended since the 2009 iteration of this Farm Preservation Plan and underwent a reexamination in 2018. An exhibit of all ADAs



Clarke Caton Hintz

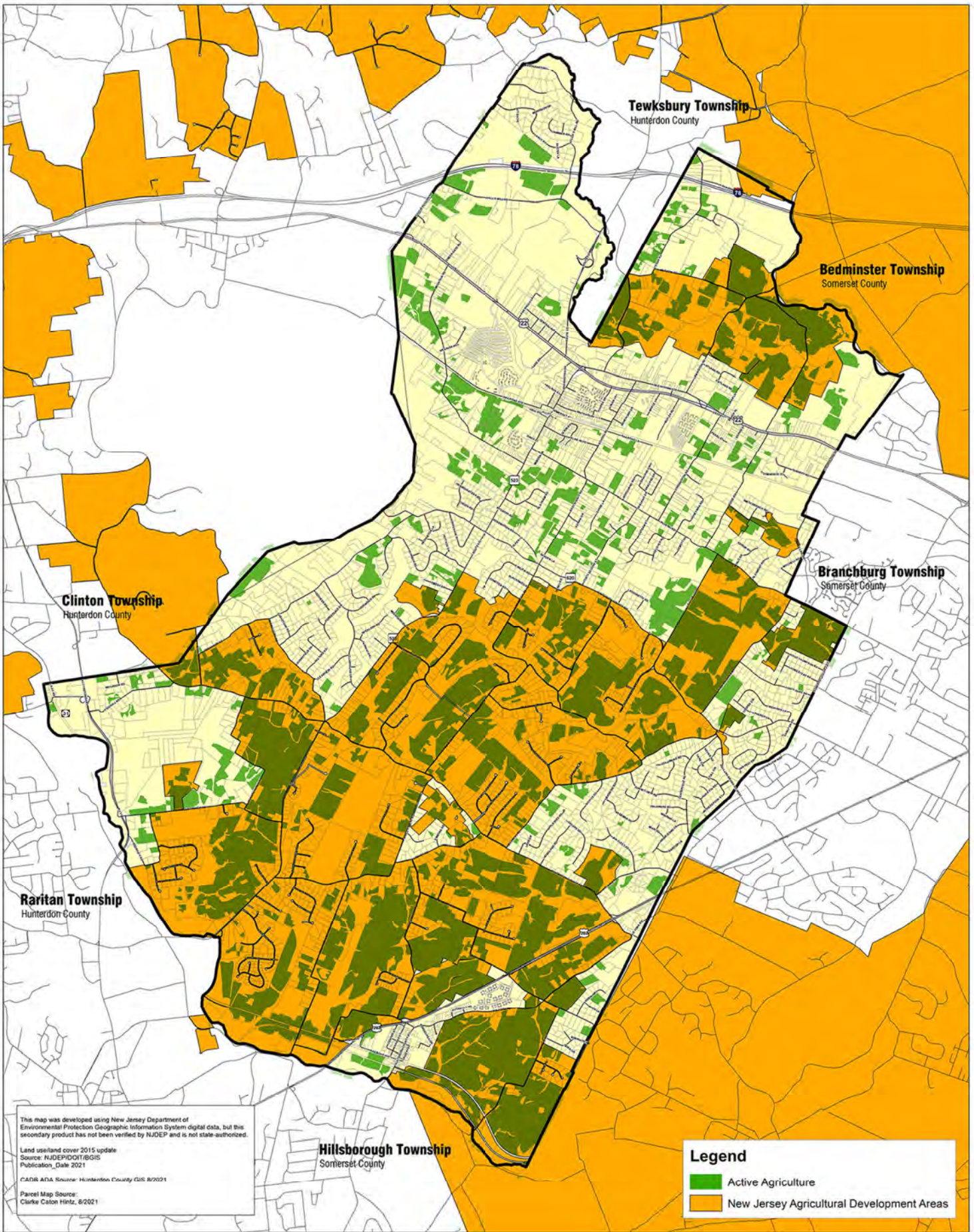
within Hunterdon County is also provided to show the relationship of the ADA boundary within Readington to the ADA boundary of surrounding municipalities.

The location of Hunterdon County's currently designated Agriculture Development Areas within Readington Township is shown on the following exhibit. As shown in the exhibit, the majority of active agricultural land as classified under 2015 LU/LC data (6,206.57 acres, or approximately 80% of all active agricultural land in Readington) is located within the ADA boundary. A total of 1,529.76 acres of active agricultural lands are located outside of the ADA.



CADB ADA Source: Hunterdon County GIS 2021





This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.

Land use/land cover 2015 update  
 Source: NJDEP/DOT/BGIS  
 Publication Date 2021

CADR ADA Source: Hunterdon County GIS 8/2021

Parcel Map Source:  
 Clarke Caton Hintz, 8/2021

**Legend**

- Active Agriculture
- New Jersey Agricultural Development Areas



2021 FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

# ADA and Active Agriculture

Readington Township, Hunterdon County, NJ

**Clarke Caton Hintz**  
 Architecture  
 Planning  
 Landscape Architecture

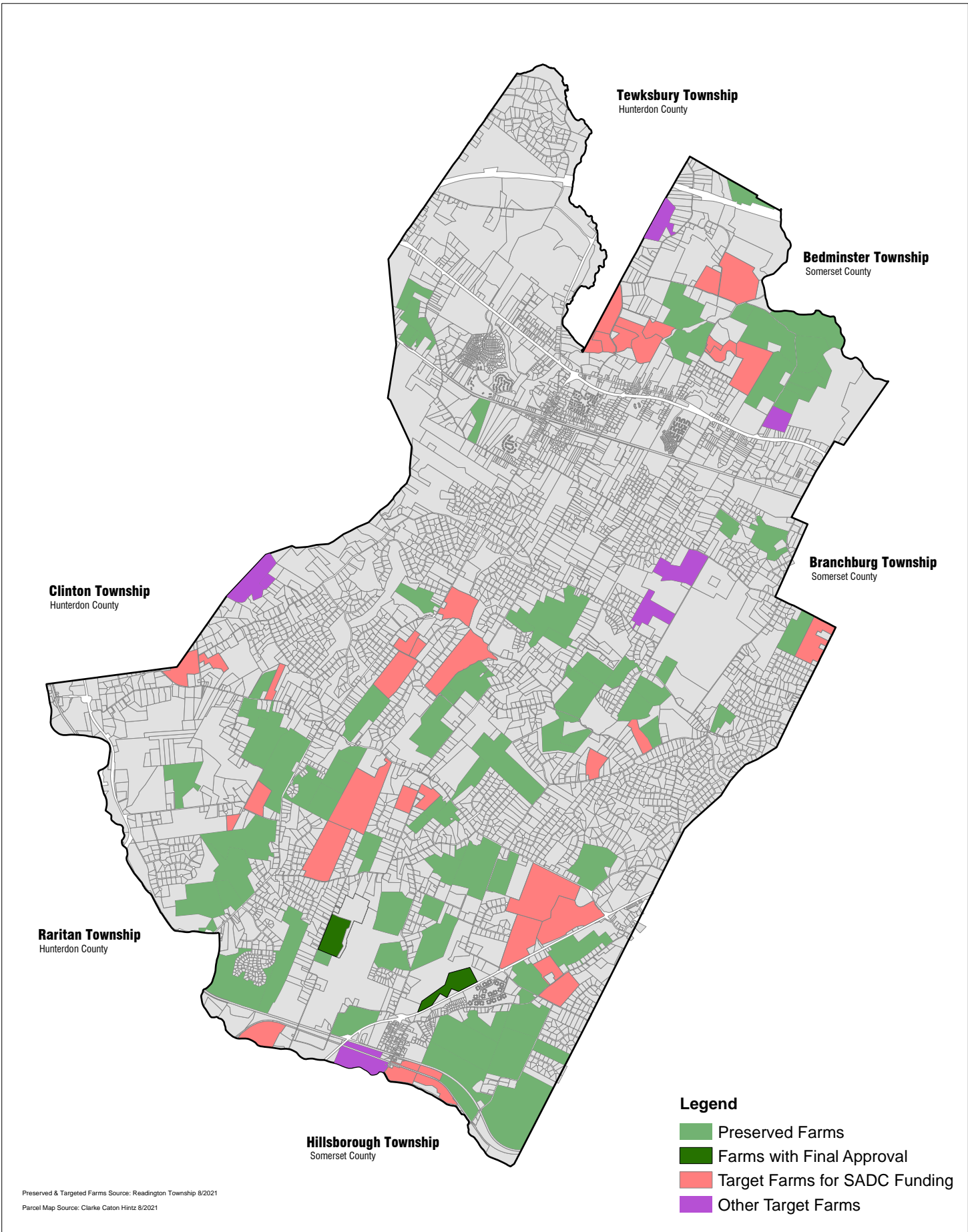


**B. FARMLAND PRESERVED TO DATE BY PROGRAM**

The following tables summarize farmland preserved to date by program. The location of all preserved farmland is illustrated on the accompanying map. The Preserved Farmland map includes farms that have received municipal, County or SADC final approval, but are not yet technically designated as preserved.

**B.1. County Easement Purchase (24 Farms, 2,216 acres)**

Table 14: County Easement Purchases					
Block	Lot	Original Name	Acres	Program	Ownership of Easement
12.01	15	Emmet	34	FP 2006	County
14	1	E.Schley	104	Donation	County
14	1.01	J. Schley (2)	20	FP 2017	County
14	50	J. Schley	87	FP 2001A	County
15	1	Reeve Schley	100	FP 2000	County
15	1.02	Reeve Schley	61	FP 2000	County
45	10	Silver Bit & Spur LLC	41	FP 2003	County
52	10	Hruebesh	79	FP 1999	County
53	22	Wade/Nicholson (BLN)	131	FP 1998	County
55	8	Kappus	51	FP 2004	County
64	29	Chesla	41	FP 2008	County
64	44	Bauer-Cole	126	FP 1994	County
66	2	Ann Reno/Readington	52	FP 2001A	County
66	45, 45.01	Moore	68	FP 1995	County
70	38.02	Estate of Stewart Keane	88	FP 2005	County
72	11	Schaefer C&C	90	FP 1999	County
72	23	Schaefer, William & Chris	128	FP 1999	County
72	5, 5.02	Bartles	95	FP 2001A	County
93	13	Burjan	105	FP 1995	County
93	28	Burjan/Profeta	137	FP 2001A	County
52.01, 46	14, 21	Romano/Kowal	110	FP 2000	County
55, 66	12 & 9, 48	Wallendjack	93	FP 1987	County
93, 95	19, 13	Bill Mason (1)	85	FP 1998	County
15	3.02	John Schley	19	FP 2017	County
65	12 & 12.01	C&S Little	31	FP 2009	County
93	18 & 20	Bill Mason (2)	158	FP 1998	County
94	19	Little Hills/Toll Brothers	82		County
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>2,216</b>	Source: Ag Advisory Committee, Readington Twp, 2021	





**B.2. COUNTY PLANNING INCENTIVE GRANT**

None to date.

**B.3. MUNICIPAL PLANNING INCENTIVE GRANTS (27 FARMS, 1,214 ACRES)**

Table 15: Municipal Planning Incentive Grants						
Block	Lot	Name	Acres	Round	Program	Ownership
13	62	Hamewith Farm	82	2005	FP PIG VIII	County
15	4	Arnaudy	26	2005	FP PIGVIII	County
39	14	Cuchiaro	25	2005	FP PIGVIII	County
39	49	Peters	65	2013	MPIG	County
46	22.01	P. Reno/Grumpy LLC	70	2000A	FP PIG I	County
53	5.02	S.H.H.R.C/Freeman	21	2000B	PIG II	County
53	9	Dolan/Dodge	23	2011	MPIG	County
55	17	Scanlon	41	2000A	FP PIG I	County
55	17.02	Scanlon	44	2000A	FP PIG I	County
56	5	James	19	2009	MPIG	County
57	2	Schultz/Readington	48	2000A	FP PIG I	County
57	13.01	Staats	53	2005	FP PIG VIII	County
62	1	Jackson/Doyle	33	2000B	FP PIG II	County
63	13	Accetola	64	2000B	FP PIG II	County
65	23	Hanna	24	2000B	FP PIG II	County
66	17	Dabrowski	36	2000B	FP PIG II	County
67	12	Cole	21	2017	MPIG	County
72	10.02	Pagano	33	2000A	FP PIG I	County
75	19.01	Rica II/Readington	39	2000A	FP PIG I	County
75	35 & 40	Jones	52	2000A	FP PIG I	County
75	33	Saqa, Hanna J Estate	115			
80	1	Saronno/Mada Farms	58	2005	FP PIG VIII	County
93	12	Miller/Davidson	41	2000A	FP PIG I	County
94	17	Readington/Toll/Egbert	27	2002A		
96	2	Triple D LLC	45	2005	FP PIG VIII	County
96	18	D'Urso/Pimenta	79	2000A	PIG I	County
98	2	Padavanni	30	2005	PIG VIII	County
		Total	1,214			

Source: Agricultural Advisory Committee, Readington Township, Nov. 2021





**B.4. SADC DIRECT EASEMENT PURCHASE (ONE FARM, 125 ACRES)**

Table 16: SADC Direct Easement Purchase					
Block	Lot	Name	Acres	Program	Ownership
66	24	Allen	125	Direct EP	State

*Source: Agricultural Advisory Committee, Readington Township, Nov. 2021*

**B.5. SADC FEE SIMPLE (TWO FARMS, 450 ACRES)**

Table 17: SADC Fee Simple					
Block	Lot	Name	Acres	Round	Program
62	4 & 7	Dobozynski/Doyle	231	State, Fee	State
98	3	Van Doren/Kanach	219	State, Fee	State

*Source: Agricultural Advisory Committee, Readington Township, Nov. 2021*

**B.6. NON-PROFIT.**

None.

**B.7. TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS:**

None.



**B.8. OTHER PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS (15 FARMS, 811 ACRES)**

<b>Table 18: Other Programs and Partnerships</b>						
Block	Lot	Name	Acres	Easement	Program	Ownership
13	57	Renda	70	Green Acres	Green Acres	State GA
15	3, 3.01,3.02	Reeve Schley	50	Farmland	Township	Township
20	11	Csepi	27	Green Acres	Green Acres	Township
20	16,22,23	DeGeronimo	65	Green Acres	Green Acres	Twp/Co.
22	6	Jensen	25	Green Acres	Green Acres	Township
50	14	Burgher/Garfield	23	Green Acres	Green Acres	Twp. GA
55	21	Knocke/Spillane	25	Green Acres	Green Acres	Twp. GA
55	13	Lachenmayr	32	Green Acres	Green Acres	Twp. GA
64	8	Spring Meadow	55	Farmland	Cluster	Township
73	17	Vizzoni/Kania	124	Farmland	Cluster	Township
73	26.01	Hrynyk	121	Farmland	Cluster	Township
74	5	Saronno/Nicholson	12	Farmland	Township	Township
74	26.01	Lazy Brook Est/Leisch	51	Farmland	Cluster	Township
74	27	Kanach/Saronno	82	Green Acres	Green Acres	State GA
75	32	Lane/Zweerink Farm	49	Green Acres	Green Acres	Twp. GA
		<b>Total</b>	<b>811</b>			

*Source: Agricultural Advisory Committee, Readington Township, Nov. 2021*

**C. TERM FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

Under the Term Farmland Preservation Program, farmland owners agree to voluntarily restrict non-agricultural development on their land for a period of eight (8) or sixteen (16) years in exchange for certain benefits, including the opportunity to apply for soil and water conservation grants. There are two types of Term Farmland Preservation Programs: one type requires a formal agreement between the landowner and county, and the other (the municipally-approved program) requires an agreement between the landowner, county, and municipality.



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#### **D. COORDINATION WITH MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION INITIATIVES.**

Readington Township has also worked at preserving open space for conservation purposes. There are presently 2,368.18 acres of municipal open space, 792.83 acres of County open space, 863.4 acres of State open space, 220.9 acres of private open space and 107 acres of open space belonging to the Board of Education for a total of 4,352.3 acres of preserved open space within the Township. Of this open space, 2,334.13 acres is considered to be compatible with agriculture, as noted in the PIG Project Area Summary form in Appendix A. Readington coordinates its open space preservation with its farmland preservation in appropriate ways.

As an example of coordination through acquisition, Readington purchased the 183 acre Romano Farm in 1999 and divided the farm into a 73-acre parcel and a 110-acre tract. The Township preserved the 73-acre parcel with Green Acres funds because it contained wooded and riparian areas. The 110-acre tract became a farmland preservation application to the CADB. Readington auctioned the 110-acre farm with one Residential Development Site Opportunity (RDSO). The County purchased the Farmland Preservation easement in 2002. There are a number of similar examples of accomplishing both conservation of open space and the preservation of farmland in projects over the last two decades.

There are also many examples of municipal open space acquisitions that have provided a buffer to agricultural land, where open space preservation prevents encroachment of residential development next to farms. With regard to coordination with hunting leases, Readington rents its open space to hunters for deer predation wherever possible. Readington also rents many parcels of open space land that have tillable fields to local farmers.

Hunterdon County owns 792.83 acres of conservation land in Readington. It consists of mature woodland on Round and Cushetunk Mountains and riparian land along the South Branch of the Raritan River. The County's large conservation tracts are not suitable for agriculture but it does issue annual permits for deer hunting on these tracts.

The State owns 863.4 acres of open space in Readington. It leases a large portion of its Raritan River Wildlife Management Area to local farmers, and also allows deer hunting on all of its WMA's.



## E. FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM FUNDING EXPENDED TO DATE

Readington uses municipal bonding as a revolving fund to pre-purchase easements and land for Farmland Preservation purposes. The Township borrows money for farmland preservation projects as needed. Land purchases make use of short-term notes to carry the debt while the Township is waiting for reimbursements from the County and the State. The reimbursements are used to pay off the short-term debt. Long-term municipal bonds are used to pay the final municipal balance. The exact amount of municipal debt attributed to farmland preservation changes annually. In 2021, the Townships overall debt, as well as its remaining Farmland Preservation debt, is low by historic standards. Much of the preservation debt was carried for several years, and then reimbursed, as easements were funded and sometimes, when preserved farms were auctioned. Since many of the farms were preserved 15-25 years ago, much of the long-term debt used to pay the municipal portion has been paid off.

Readington Township was one of the earliest Townships in the State to participate in the Farmland Preservation Program. In 1987, the Wallendjack Farm was the fourth farm in the State and second in Hunterdon County, to be preserved. Thirty-four years later, in 2021, Readington has facilitated the preservation of 74 farms, using a variety of programs, funding sources and methods. In 2013, the Township received an award from the State for preserving the highest number of farms under Municipal Pig Program, a total of 27 farms.

Under the Farmland Preservation Program, the State has expended \$26,872,327, the County has expended \$8,269,623, and the municipality has expended \$8,303,927. The federal government’s grant program contributed \$570,000 toward the preservation of the Peters Farm. The local, State and County program benefitted from private landowners’ charitable donations totaling \$1,406,717. Readington recently purchased two farms in fee, the 52 acre farm located on Block 94, Lot 11 and the 54 acre Saums Farm, and has applied to the County PIG Program for re-imburement. Readington’s up-front expenditure for these two farm easements was approximately \$1,800,000.

**Table 20: Farmland Preservation Funding Cost Share**

State	Hunterdon Co.	Readington Twp.	Other Cost	TOTAL
\$26,872,327	\$8,269,623	\$8,303,927	\$1,976,717	\$45,422,594
59.2%	18.2%	18.3%	4.3%	100%

Source: Hunterdon County Farmland Preservation Program website, last updated January 1, 2021, revised per data from the Agricultural Advisory Committee, Readington Township, 2021.



The Green Acres program funded the preservation of nine preserved farms, a total of 366 acres. Prior to 1999, the Green Acres Program funded agricultural/conservation easements on privately held land, contributing 50% of the easement value. On the farms preserved, Readington contributed an estimated \$1,537,000, and Green Acres contributed \$2,582,000. One landowner donated the conservation/farmland easement on 50 acres of their 70-acre farm. Taking advantage of the Green Acres program helped preserve farms that would not have ranked high enough, or met the strict criteria, for the Farmland Preservation Program.

Five Farms, totaling 373 acres were preserved as a result of the Township's cluster ordinance, in effect from the late 80's till the mid 90's which allowed developers using a residential cluster to set aside a privately owned, deed restricted farm, rather than publically owned open space. This technique preserved farmland at no cost to the taxpayers.

All government farmland preservation expenditures to date, utilizing all of the programs mentioned in the preceding text, is approximately \$50,000,000. The total, adding charitable donations, would be approximately \$51,700,000.

## **F. MONITORING OF PRESERVED FARMLAND**

The holder of the deed of easement is responsible for annual monitoring of preserved farms. The SADC is responsible for the monitoring of farms preserved through the Direct Easement and Fee Simple Programs, as well as any Municipal PIG preserved farms if the County is not a funding partner. Readington and, in some cases, Green Acres monitors those easements owned by Readington and the State Green Acres Program. The Township and the AAC would notify the appropriate agency if violations were suspected. Hunterdon County contracts with the Hunterdon Soil Conservation District for County held easement monitoring.

## **G. COORDINATION WITH TDR PROGRAMS**

Readington does not presently have a TDR Program.



## V. FUTURE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

### A. PRESERVATION GOALS

As previously discussed in Section III, Land Use Planning Context, Readington's 1990 Master Plan and Master Plan Amendments through 2021 include specific goals and policies that promote the preservation of farmland and retention of agriculture in the Township.

As outlined in the attached Project Area Summary Form, there are currently two farms that total 107.68 acres with final approval that are "in the pipeline" to be added to the Township's inventory of preserved farmland. These are the Daniel/LeCompte/Khalsa Ji LLC Farm, located on Block 94, Lot 11, and the Floyd Saums Farm, located on Block 74, Lot 4.

To further implement the Township's farmland preservation goals and policies, the Readington Open Space and Agricultural Advisory Committee has identified 37 farms and farmland tracts in the Township's Project Area which currently meet its criteria for farmland preservation. The total area of these 37 targeted farms is 2,133.54 acres. A reasonable goal for the Township is to preserve approximately 50% of the targeted farms over the next 10 years, or approximately 1,065 acres. Readington plans to meet this goal by preserving 100 acres in the first year, 600 acres over the first five years and preserving the remaining ~400 acres over the second five years.

Of these 37 targeted farms, nine (9) are located outside of the Hunterdon County Agricultural Development Area. These are indicated on the Preserved Farms map in purple as "Other Target Farms". The Township understands that in order to qualify for PIG funding for these farms, the HCADA will need to be amended first. The Township is considering other forms of preservation funding in lieu of PIG funding in the event that the ADA is not amended in the future.

### B. PROJECT AREA SUMMARIES

The Project Area totals 16,774 acres. As indicated in the accompanying Project Area Summary sheet, there are 37 targeted farm properties totaling 2,133.54 acres within the Project Area. In addition, the Project Area contains 107.68 acres of final approval farmland, 3,992 acres of preserved farmland, 811 acres of other deed restricted farmland, and 2,334.13 acres other preserved open space compatible with agriculture. Excluding the targeted farms, the preceding preserved farmland and open space totals 7,244.81



acres. The density of the Project Area is calculated as this total (7,244.81) divided by the total area of the Project Area (16,774 acres), or 43%. Soil productivity for the targeted farms is calculated by dividing the total area of important farmland soils for the targeted farms by the total area of the targeted farms. Altogether, the targeted farms include 927 acres of prime soils and 765 acres of statewide important soils. Dividing the total area of these important farmland soils (927+765 = 1692 acres) by the total area of the targeted farms (2,133.54 acres) results in a 79% soil productivity.

Readington has historically used the County designated ADA within Readington Township as its Project Area. The Township's Farmland Preservation Plan, included in the 2009 PIG application, noted that there are farms which otherwise meet the Township and County criteria but are not in the ADA. Readington included these farms in its project area in its 2009 Farmland Preservation Plan and is including them again in this Plan. These areas include farms that fall just outside the County's mapped ADA but that otherwise met the ADA's criteria. This situation exists because the CADB, in its 2018 ADA revision, chose criteria, not of farmland tracts, but specifically of tax block criteria in delineating the ADA. Whole tax blocks were either in or out, so that occasionally farms that met the ADA criteria and were contiguous across a road to the ADA were excluded. Readington's project area has not changed significantly in the 35 years that it has been participating in the Farmland Preservation Program, but the ADA delineation has changed.

When preservation opportunities have arisen in areas that otherwise meet the criteria, Readington has requested a revision to the ADA to make farms eligible, and the CADB has obliged. Over the years, several farms that had fallen just outside the ADA have been preserved, and several others have been approved for funding. These have been successfully amended into the ADA. This plan includes targeted farms that are outside of the ADA. These are identified on the Preserved Farms map in purple and labeled as "Other Target Farms". If the possibility of acquiring any of these farms comes closer to fruition, the Township will contact the County to request an amendment to the ADA. If the ADA cannot be amended at a future date, the Township will consider alternative forms of preservation funding.

Some targeted farms are located in the SRR Zone where agriculture is not a permitted use. All of the targeted farms in the SRR Zone are preexisting non-conforming uses in the Zone. If the possibility of acquiring these farms comes closer to fruition, the appropriate documentation will be furnished to indicate that the farm is a preexisting non-conforming use. It should also be noted that §148-51.E of the Readington Township Land Development Ordinance states *All farm and agricultural uses, including the growing*



*of crops, nurseries and the raising and training of poultry, small animals and livestock, are permitted everywhere in the Township, subject to additional provisions...with those additional provisions setting bulk restrictions that set limits based on the size of the property and specific activities that must be kept a certain distance away from property lines. This section is found in the chapter on Accessory Buildings and Structures. This provision allows for the existing farms that are targeted by the Township in the SRR Zone to increase the intensity of agricultural use in the event of preservation, even if Agriculture is not a permitted use in the zone.*

### **C. MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA COORDINATION**

Readington Township has aligned its eligibility criteria with the County “Prerequisites”, discussed on page 112 of the *Hunterdon County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan*.

The County prerequisites are as follows:

- The farm must be located in an ADA.  
Readington has, however, preserved farms that were not initially in an ADA, but were amended into the ADA during the application process. Readington’s criteria require that this amendment be successful.
- The County has a 40 acre minimum unless the farm is adjacent to preserved lands.
- The farms must meet the State’s minimum eligibility criteria.
- Farms must be 50% tillable.
- The Municipality must agree to share the local contribution. The use of Federal ALE funding may be used to offset municipal cost share.
- All applications are subject to CADB preliminary approval.

The Township criteria are as follows:

- The farm needs to be accepted for consideration for County funding, that is the farm must meet the County prerequisites and the State criteria. Both are listed in the appendix.





There have been otherwise worthy farms, over the years, that have fallen short of County and State criteria for Farmland Preservation, that Readington has preserved by easement restricting them for “agriculture and conservation” using Green Acres Funds, and these farms remain in private ownership and remain in Farmland Assessment. The list entitled “Other Deed Restricted Farmland” shows 15 farms totaling 811 acres, some of which that were preserved with Green Acres Funds. At the time of preservation, these farms did not meet the criteria either because of their size or the fact that they were located in an area some distance from the Township’s designated ADA. Three such farms are located in close proximity to each other on Mountain Road in the Township’s northwestern quadrant. One of the farms did not meet the County’s criteria only because the property was more than 50% wooded. Targeted farms that are not in the HCADA are indicated in the Preserved Farms map in purple as “Other Target Farms”. The Township may pursue means of preservation funding other than PIG funding for farms not located in the HCADA.

#### **D. MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY RANKING CRITERIA TO PRIORITIZE FARMS**

For most of the history of Hunterdon County Farmland Preservation Program, the Hunterdon CADB has approved and utilized ranking criteria for applicants to both the County Easement Purchase Program and the County PIG Program. Readington Township does not maintain independent criteria, relying on the County criteria for ranking applicants to Readington’s Municipal PIG Program. The County ranking criteria is found in the Appendix of this report. The HCADB criteria and the SADC criteria are similar, in that they both consider Soils, Boundaries and Buffers, Local Commitment, and Size and Density, and Imminence of Change. The Hunterdon CADB adds additional ranking criteria entitled Soil Conservation and Farm Practices Management.

#### **E. MUNICIPAL POLICY RELATED TO FARMLAND PRESERVATION APPLICATIONS**

##### **E.1. Approval of Housing Opportunities**

Readington Township’s policies regarding housing opportunities on preserved farms has been, and will continue to be, somewhat conservative, generally following the lead of the SADC and the CADB.

- a. Size of Farmhouse: When at all possible, the Township has put a cap on the size of the farmhouse on the farm being preserved. Farms that were



purchased fee simple and resold were capped at 4,500 square feet for a single-family house and 5,500 for a two-family house. On a number of farms Readington has been able to put a cap on the size of a farmhouse as part of the negotiations. The Township's impetus for limiting the size of the farmhouses is an attempt to keep the farms affordable to professional farmers.

- b. Overall housing opportunities permitted:
  - i. Number of houses: On a number of occasions, Readington has made an exception to this normal practice of allowing one farmhouse per preserved farm, usually to accommodate a family consideration. A recent approval allowed a two-family house within the exception area and another allowed a severable exception as well as a non-severable exception. It is Readington Township's intent to continue a generally conservative approach to housing on preserved farms but to allow for flexibility on occasion, for good reason.
  - ii. Residual Dwelling Site Opportunity Allocation: SADC regulations permit up to one dwelling unit per 100 acres of vacant farmland, including existing dwellings, referred to as a Residual Dwelling Site Opportunity (RDSO). There are few requests for RDSOs on Readington Farms at this stage of its program, since only farms greater than 100 acres with no existing farmhouse on them would be eligible for an RDSO. This situation is not likely to come up in the future due to the size of the remaining targeted farms.
  - iii. Agricultural Labor Housing: There are very few preserved farms in Readington Township that require agricultural housing, and to date there have been no requests to add Ag Labor Housing where none existed at the time of preservation. Readington Township would be generally very conservative in reviewing a request for Ag Labor Housing, because it would be very tempting for the housing unit to be converted to a rental if the type of agriculture changed and the unit was no longer needed for agriculture. It is recognized that this may present enforcement challenges.
  - iv. Housing Replacement: According to the deed of easement, a house can be built to replace a house in existence at the time of



conveyance of the deed of easement, but only with the approval of the CADB and the SADC. Readington Township would generally like to discourage the demolition of historic houses on preserved farms. Readington would like to discourage the replacement of a modestly sized farmhouse with a house of excessive size because it could make the farm financially out of reach for professional farmers. Readington Township would also like to discourage a change in location of an existing house that negatively affects the viability of the farm. It would be Readington's policy to weigh in on such a request to the deciding board.

## E.2. Division of the Premises

- a. The deed of easement in preserved farms allows for a division of the premises in limited circumstances. A landowner must first obtain approval from the CADB and the SADC, both of which must make a determination that the division will serve an agricultural purpose and that the resulting parcels would be agriculturally viable.
- b. Readington policy on divisions would mirror the policies of the State and County, and that would be to approach this issue in a conservative fashion, knowing that there are, in fact, circumstances where a division does make sense for the farmer and for his family while at the same time, it is clear that the division does not diminish the long term viability of the farm.

## E.3. Approval of Exceptions

- a. Non-Severable exceptions: The Hunterdon County Agricultural Development Board generally encourages non-severable exception areas around the residence and structures on preserved farms, because they feel that giving landowners the flexibility that such an exception affords prevents problems of enforcement later, without measurably detracting from the farms agricultural viability. For this reason, Readington in recent years has encouraged applicants to request such an exception area. In addition, for farms that Readington buys in fee simple and resells, the Township generally creates a non-severable exception surrounding the farm residence.
- b. Severable exceptions: While severable exceptions are discouraged, it is recognized that there are instances where such exceptions are necessary, or



desirable. The County ranking criteria does subtract 5 points for severable exceptions, and this tends to discourage the requests in competitive rounds. Readington's policies mirror the County, in that severable exceptions are discouraged, but are allowed when a good case has been made for them.

## F. FUNDING PLAN

### F.1. Description of Municipal Funding Sources

Municipal Bonding and Pre-acquisition: Readington has credited the Township's success in preserving so many farms during the decade between 1999 and 2009 on its willingness to "pre-acquire" farms, or a farms' agricultural easement. Readington has now preserved 56 farms using the State Farmland Preservation Program, and it pre-acquired land or easements on 31 of these. This process was key to the Township's success, since the biggest impediment to landowner participation was the prospect of navigating a long, often uncertain, bureaucratic process. Pre-acquisition allowed Readington to offer farm owners a "quick cash sale" instead. The Township paid for the entire purchase using short-term notes. After the closing, Readington served as the applicant to the Farmland Preservation Program. When the application was approved, often a year or more later, Readington would be repaid, and pay off around 80% of the notes. Typically, the State has paid 60% and the County 20% of the certified value. The remaining 20%, the Township's share, went to long-term municipal bonds. The principal and interest have been paid annually over the length of the bond using moneys accrued in the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund.

Referendums and Trust Funds: Readington is proud of the fact that it was the first local government in New Jersey to hold a referendum to approve funding for Open Space and Farmland Preservation. In 1978, Readington Township voters approved bonding for a one-million-dollar bond. In 1994, Readington voters approved an annual \$.02/\$100 dedicated tax and initiated an Open Space Trust Fund to be used for land preservation. In 1997, Hunterdon County supported a County referendum approving a \$.03/\$100 dedicated tax and the creation of the Hunterdon County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. Over the years, approximately 30% is utilized for the County match on preserved farms. In 2021, the Township's 2-cent tax generates \$661,488.

The Township presently owns the easements on one farm, the easement on the farm located on Block 94, Lot 11, 52 acres on Route 202. Readington is anticipating a sale of the easement to the County. Readington currently owns one farm in fee, that is the 54-acre Saums Farm, on Rockafellows Mill Road. The Township will sell the easement to



the county and then auction the farm. The proceeds from the sale will pay off most of the notes issued for the fee purchase of the farm. For the remainder, it is likely that County Trust fund monies accrued in the Municipal Grants Fund will pay the balance. Since Readington's debt ratio stands at 1.37%, well below the municipal debt limit of 3.5%, when new opportunities arise, new notes could be issued, simulating a revolving fund.

The Township's long standing policy of pre-acquiring easements and bonding for the municipal cost has contributed immeasurably to the success of Readington's farmland preservation efforts. Between 1999 and 2009, Readington preserved 23 farms under the State's Municipal PIG program, and all were either pre-acquired or the Township purchased the farms in fee simple. This success and the ability to complete so much preservation in a relatively short period of time was the direct result of Readington's willingness to pre-acquire and to close relatively quickly after going to contract. This process not only increased the rate of success, but it also lowered the total cost as more farms were closed at much lower prices than if the preservation had been put off to the later years, when land prices had escalated.

Of the \$661,488 tax added to Readington's Trust Fund in 2021, \$400,000 was budgeted for debt service. It is estimated that most of the Township's land debt will be paid down over the next five years, as preservation projects in recent years have been happening at a slower pace and paid off completely by a combination of State funds and County and Municipal Trust Fund monies.

## **F.2. Financial Policies Related to Cost Share Requirements**

There have been various changes to the cost share policies of the Farmland Preservation Program since the easement acquisitions began in 1985. In the earliest years of the program, the County and the State shared the entire cost. By the mid 90's the cost share for County acquisition became 60% State, 20% County and 20% municipal funding. Twenty out of twenty-five County Easement purchases in Readington were funded at this rate, and all twenty-seven of the Townships Municipal PIG farms were preserved at this funding rate.

100% State Funding: Two State farmland preservation programs utilize 100% State funding. These are the State Direct Easement Purchase, in which the State reserves monies for high ranking farms that meet stricter criteria. In 2004, a 128-acre farm in Readington was preserved using this program. Also, the State Fee Simple Purchase Program uses 100% State funding. The State buys farms in fee, deed restricts them and auctions the deed restricted farm. In 1996, the State used this program to preserve the



219-acres, Kanach Farm in Three Bridges, and the 233 acre Dobozyński Farm, now known as the Readington River Buffalo Farm, on County Route 523.

Installment payments: In 1999, with the onset of the Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) Program, Hunterdon County instituted installment purchase. Over the next decade, Hunterdon County paid out its 20% cost share to applicants and municipalities participating in the PIG program in ten annual installments, rather than in one single payment, beginning with the year of final approval. By 2009, it had become apparent that administration costs of installment purchase negated any financial benefits for the County, and it discontinued this as a mandatory method of payout. The County continues to offer landowners this opportunity, with the thinking that landowners would use it for tax reasons. As it turns out, given a choice, most landowners prefer their entire payment at closing.

Sliding Scale: At the present time, in 2021, the State determines its cost share percentage on a sliding scale. Agricultural easements valued lower than \$9,000 per acre are funded at a higher rate, up to 80%, and easements valued at over \$50,000 per acre are funded at a lower rate. Hunterdon County shares the remaining local cost share on a 50-50 basis. Beginning with the onset of the sliding scale formula in 1999, all of the PIG applications and the majority of County Easement Purchase applications in Readington Township received certified values within the \$9,000-\$50,000 range, and were eligible for State funding at the 60% rate. The two exceptions were the Kappus Farm and the Bartles farm, which had lower certified values because they lacked road frontage. It is unlikely that the sliding scale will change the percentage cost share of future transactions for the foreseeable future because the value of easements in Readington exceeded the minimum and fall well below the maximum. Local funding splits the 40% contribution evenly, at a rate 20% for the county and 20% the municipality.

Ranking: In the decade beginning in 2010, and continuing into the decade starting in 2020, the Farmland Preservation Program has gotten less, rather than more competitive. At the present time, most applicants meeting the eligibility criteria are able to successfully receive funding and to preserve their farms. Nevertheless, all Hunterdon County farms that apply to the Program are ranked against each other using an approved funding formula, which determines the order in which farms are funded. Each year can be different, and whether or not funding is sufficient is dependent on the size and location of the County's applicants in any given year.

County Funding: County funding for the Farmland Preservation Program comes out of the Hunterdon County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation



Trust Fund. To replenish this fund Hunterdon County collects \$0.03/\$100 of assessed valuation annually. In 2020, this amounted to \$6 million, of which 30% was set-aside for the Farmland Preservation Program. In 2020, \$1,800,000 was reserved for the County cost share for all county farmland preservation projects. In addition, 10% of the proceeds from each municipality is set aside for the Municipal Grants Program, reserved for preservation projects within each township. Readington's reservation averages about \$100,000 annually, and this money can be used either for farmland or open space preservation, as needed.

Municipal Funding: Readington Township's local share comes from the Township's Open space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. This Trust Fund is replenished annually by a \$0.02/\$100 dedicated tax, result in \$661,488 of funding in 2021. The municipality uses short-term notes or serial bonding to provide funding for farmland preservation projects as needed, and uses the Trust Fund monies to cover the debt service. Over the course of the Township's farmland program, Readington used 100% municipal funds to fund three farmland preservation easements. It also preserved four additional farms at no cost to the Township by employing an 80% mandatory cluster ordinance which, in the late 1980's and early 1990's, allowed for the open space set aside for a clustered development to be a privately owned deed restricted farm.

State Funding Prior to 1999: Beginning in 1983, and prior to 1998, the State contribution for Farmland Preservation was funded by a series of voter referendums each of which authorized the issuance of \$50 million bonds.

Garden State Preservation Trust: In November 1998, NJ voters approved the creation of the Garden State Preservation Trust. The enabling legislation provided for the annual issuance of \$98 million dollar bonds to be used for land preservation. New Jersey set the historic goal of preserving one million acres of land within a 10-year period, between 1999 and 2009, and committed the unprecedented amount of one billion dollars toward meeting this land preservation goal. Readington Township took full advantage of this funding opportunity during this decade, preserving 46 of the total of 56 farms, which have been preserved to date using the State Farmland Preservation Program. It should be noted that Readington preserved 10 farms using State Green Acres funding, which also comes from the Garden State Preservation Trust.

Open Space Dedication of the Corporate Business Tax: On November 4, 2014, New Jersey voters approved the dedication of a percentage of the Corporate Business Tax (CBT) toward environmental, conservation, and preservation programs. This dedication



took effect in 2015 at 4%, and increased to 6% in 2020, set to continue in perpetuity. In fiscal year 2020, this resulted in an annual amount of \$164 million for the Garden State Preservation Trust Conservation and Preservation Programs, with 31% or \$50.8 million reserved Statewide for Farmland Preservation.

### F.3 Cost Projections and Funding Plan; 1, 5, and 10-year Goals

It has been difficult to project land and easement values 5 to 10 years into the future. This is best illustrated looking at the variation of certified values for farms in Readington over the past 34 years. The first easement purchased on a farm in Readington in 1987 sold for \$7,804 per acre. Eight to twelve years later between 1995 and 1999 easements on half dozen or more farms sold for between \$6,800 per acre and \$7,400 per acre. Values rose to just over \$10,000 per acre by 2004, to a high of over \$20,000 by 2010. By 2021, after the full impact of the Great Recession took effect, certified values fell to an amount closer to \$12,000 per acre.

In the last decade, the limiting factor for preserving the remainder of Readington's targeted farms has not been funding, but finding willing applicants, thus making cost projections difficult. After years of outreach, farm owners are familiar with the program, but they have not stepped forward for either family or financial reasons. Often preservation opportunities arise, unpredictably, when there is a generational change. It is important to note that in 2020, Readington demonstrated that it is willing to continue its aggressive approach of pursuing Farmland Preservation opportunities as they arise, with the fee-simple purchase of the Saums Farm. Readington's strong commitment to Farmland Preservation, and in particular, its willingness to use municipal finds up front to make a quick cash purchase is credited with its success to date in preserving so many targeted farms within its designated Agricultural Development Area. In 2021, there are 37 farms totaling 2,134 acres on Readington's list of targeted farms.

Total Annual Cost for 100 acres per year: \$1,200,000

- 20% Municipal: \$240,000
- 20% County: \$240,000
- 60% State: \$720,000





#### **F.4. Any Other Financial Information as Appropriate**

Readington's debt ratio is currently at 1.37%. The Township's current debt as of December 31, 2020 is \$43,928,888.80.

Both the County and the Township Trust Funds benefitted from a recent reevaluation of Township properties. The County's Preservation Trust Fund collects \$0.03 on the dollar from County residents and monies from this Trust Fund are routinely being used to help Readington Township acquire Open Space and to preserve farmland as opportunities arise.

Readington's Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, which collects \$0.02/\$100 of assessed valuation each year, is projected to collect \$661,488 in 2021. Historically, over the last two decades, Readington's trust fund has been used almost entirely to pay debt service for prior Open Space and Farmland Preservation projects.

Beginning in 1996 and continuing through 2003 Readington made use of the Green Trust Loan Program to finance Green Acres land and recreation projects using 20 year loans at reduced interest rates (1% and 2%). The trust fund monies were used annually for the Green Trust Loan payments. The loans will be entirely paid off in 2023, and the annual debt payment has now been reduced to \$171,500 for 2021.

Debt is still outstanding for various Farmland Preservation and open space projects accomplished in at various times over the last 20 years, but much of this debt has also been paid off. Looking forward, as past debt is paid off, Readington will be able to put the substantial amount of money set aside annually in its Trust Fund toward new projects.

### **G. FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES**

#### **G.1. Municipal Staff /Consulting Resources**

Readington has an administrative staff with a good understanding of farmland preservation and its procedures. They can be counted on to process applications in an efficient manner. Readington uses the professional planning services of Clarke Caton Hintz, P.C. for developing its Farmland Preservation and Agricultural elements to its Master Plan.



Readington Township staff, which administers its farmland preservation program, has benefited tremendously from monthly meetings with the County Farmland Preservation staff to go over the status of various farms being processed for funding. These meetings are very much responsible for speeding up the Farmland Preservation process in Hunterdon County.

### **G.2. Legal Support**

Readington's municipal attorney has many years of experience handling farmland preservation contracts and closings.

### **G.3. Database Development**

This is being addressed by administrative staff and volunteers.

### **G.4. GIS Capacity and Staff Resources**

Readington's Planning Consultant, Clarke Caton Hintz, maintains the Township's GIS data base including multiple layers and coverages of farmland and agricultural data.

## **H. FACTORS LIMITING FARMLAND PRESERVATION IMPLEMENTATION**

### **H.1. Funding (county or municipal)**

- County funding: County funding proportions are established annually by the Hunterdon County Board of County Commissioners. This dedicated county tax results in the collection of approximately \$6,000,000 annually, with the 30% (as is currently apportioned by the BOCC) reserved for the County Farmland Preservation Program. Presently this amounts to approximately \$1,800,000 annually. This funding is reserved to pay the County cost share for the County Easement Purchase Program and the County and Municipal PIG Program. Each year, Hunterdon County, uses an approved ranking criteria to determine which applicants receive County funding. In recent years, this Trust fund has collected enough money to fund most eligible applicants.
- Municipal Funding: Readington Township has historically been committed to fund all farmland preservation opportunities as they arise. Readington has recently demonstrated that this policy is still current as the Township recently



“pre-purchased” the Saums Farm on Rockafellow’s Mill Road when it came up for sale. The Township issued short-term notes for the full purchase price. The Township, then, as the farm’s owner, applied to the Farmland Preservation’s County PIG program for 20% County and 60% State cost share funding. When the farm is finally preserved, the Township will sell the deed-restricted farm at auction. This process generally reimburses the Township for most of its original outlay and any remaining cost becomes the “Municipal cost share”, and is covered by municipal funds. Municipal funds are those reserved in the Township’s Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund. In 1994, Readington Township voters approved a stable source of funding for open space and farmland preservation purposes, agreeing to an annual tax of \$0.02/\$100 tax. In 2021, the dedicated tax will raise \$661,488, of which \$211,488 will be reserved for future use. Each year, some revenue is budgeted for repayment of bond principal on debt previously incurred. For 2021, this amount will be \$400,000. Since the pace of preservation has slowed in the last decade, Readington has managed to pay off most its land debt, freeing more funding for future projects. Readington, at the moment, can assure any eligible landowner who steps forward that funding would be available to preserve their farm.

## H.2. Projected Costs

Readington’s most recent Project Area Summary Form lists 37 “targeted farms” totaling 2,133 acres<sup>5</sup>. It estimated an easement value of \$12,000/acre. The estimated total cost acquisition was then estimated at \$25,602,480. If the program were to successfully preserve 100 acres of farmland per year, the annual cost would be \$1,200,000. Real estate and land values, however, are rising again, so the price /acre will likely be adjusted upward.

## H.3. Land Supply

Readington’s designated Agricultural Development Area is mapped as its designated Project Area. The aggregate size of this Project Area is 16,774.3 acres. At the present time, 7,244.81 acres of the project Area are preserved, either for agriculture or for open space. Readington’s 37 targeted farms are located within this Project Area and total 2,133 acres.

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<sup>5</sup> Readington Township’s 2022 County Planning Incentive Grant Project Area Summary Form.



#### **H.4. Landowner Interest**

With so many of the Township's farms preserved, today, there are fewer new applicants. In recent years, lack of landowner interest is clearly the limiting factor to preserving new farms in Readington Township. Despite efforts, it has been difficult to interest landowners in the Program. At this point, most landowners are familiar with the Farmland Preservation Program, having been approached multiple times over the years, and asked to consider preservation. Municipal outreach efforts have shown that most farm owners in Readington are not interested in developing their land, and, in fact, they do have a personal commitment to keeping their land in agriculture. For family or financial reasons, they feel the time is not right to join the preservation program. Nevertheless, opportunities do arise, often unexpectedly, when the financial or family situations change. The public and the Townships' governing body remain very supportive of Farmland Preservation, and the Township stands ready to assist landowners who do apply. Occasionally a farm must be sold, and the Township remains willing to consider a fee purchase when an eligible farm becomes available.

#### **H.5. Administrative Resources**

Readington has been fortunate to have a professional administrative staff that is very familiar with the Farmland Preservation Program, having many years of experience at successfully administrating the Farmland Preservation Program at the municipal level and, very importantly, coordinating with the County and the State administration. Readington also has an active Agricultural Advisory Committee that assists as necessary, particularly with outreach.

#### **H.6. Other**

When the State Farmland Program first began in 1983, with the Agriculture and Retention Act, it was very difficult to get landowners interested in the participating. But in the late eighties, land values spiked and several early participants received relatively high prices for their easements. This caught many farmers' attention, and the problem very quickly became too many applicants and limited funds. A ranking system was developed, and over the next decade, county farmers competed each year for a chance to sell their easements.



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This changed again in November of 1998, when New Jersey voters authorized the Garden State Preservation Trust. They approved the appropriation of one billion dollars of State funds, to preserve one million acres of farmland and open space over the next 10 years. There was strong political support both throughout the State, and especially within Readington Township. With this unprecedented amount of funding, there were no factors limiting the preservation of farmland between 1999 and 2009. Every effort was made to preserve as many farms as possible, as quickly as possible, and many landowners stepped up.

By 2009, in Readington, 67 farms, for a total of 4,623 acres of farmland, had been preserved. Readington had taken full advantage of State and County funding from the very beginning of the Farmland Preservation Program. Where necessary, the Township issued short-term notes to buy both land and easements in order to facilitate the preservation process. Beginning in 2010, a number of factors slowed the program down. The economy had fallen into recession, causing a sharp drop in real estate values, which, again resulted in a lack of landowner interest. The program continued over the next 10 years, but at a much slower pace. When preservation slowed, the Township was able to pay off land debt. Six additional farms were preserved between 2009 and 2019. At present, Readington's farmland preservation total stands at 73 farms, with over 4,900 acres of farmland preserved.





## VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### A. CONSISTENCY, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Readington farmers directly benefit from the following NJ Department of Agriculture's Economic Development Strategies:

- a. NJ Fresh: The State's promotion of Jersey grown, Jersey Fresh and Jersey Organic Products program is extremely helpful for the growing number of farms in Readington that rely on direct marketing of vegetables and locally grown eggs and meat. Consumers have become very aware of the benefits of buying local and this has translated into a faithful customer base for Readington farmers that sell locally.
- b. Support of Equine Industry: Equine facilities are numerous in Readington and are an important component of Readington's agricultural base. These facilities also benefit from the Economic Development Strategies promoted by the NJ Department of Agriculture. One obvious example is a sign frequently seen as one drives around Readington Township reminding drivers that the speed limit is 25 miles per hour when a horse and rider are sharing the roadway.
- c. Hay Production: Support of the equine industry translates into support for the many farmers in Readington who specialize in hay production.

### B. AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY RETENTION/ EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

#### B.1. Institutional

- a. Fee Simple Farmland Preservation Efforts: Readington Township has reacted quickly on many occasions in the past when a local farm has become available for sale. The Township has immediately moved to buy the farm in fee and then proceeded to use the Farmland Preservation Program to preserve the farm. The farm has then been auctioned deed restricted. This program has helped to retain and develop an active agricultural community here in Readington.



- b. Aggressive Farmland Preservation Efforts: First and foremost, if Readington wanted to succeed in retaining its agriculture, it had to retain working farms and a critical mass of farmland, despite the relentless threat of suburban sprawl. Readington can credit its success of preserving so many farms to one important preservation technique: Beginning about 25 years ago, the Township began offering to “pre-purchase” farms in fee, and also to pre purchase the preservation easements on farms. The success of the Farmland Preservation Program was greatly enhanced by the ability to offer landowners a “quick cash sale”. Readington paid 100% of the cost of the farm or the easement, borrowing money using short-term notes. The Township was reimbursed by taking on the role of “applicant” to the County and State Farmland Preservation Program.
- c. Agri-tourism: Readington has created and sustained a regulatory climate where agri-tourism is thriving. There are numerous examples of farms that benefit from this policy. Two large preserved family farms have been particularly successful:
- The Schaeffer Farms on County Route 523 which run a farm stand, have haunted hayrides and pick-your-own pumpkins, hold an Easter egg hunt, and a number of additional special events that are open to tourists and residents.
  - Readington River Buffalo Farm holds the annual buffalo watch in the spring and red dog day in the fall. This farm markets bison and pork meat directly from a farm store and have hayrides to pick your own pumpkins in the fall.
- d. Horse Farms: Readington has created a regulatory climate where its horse farms are thriving. Horse farms have generally been expanding their operations. A number of larger horse farms in Readington are important facilities for the larger region, including Lightfield Farms, Cheaumont Farms, and Cloverleaf Stables.
- e. Trail Network Development: Readington Township Open Space Advisory Committee volunteers, the Readington Trail Association, and the Readington Township Department of Public Works have worked cooperatively for many years to create and maintain over an estimated twenty-five miles of trails suitable for both horses and hikers. This is often



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accomplished with National Trail Grant funds, as well as the volunteer work of local Boy Scout troupes and Eagle Scout candidates working towards their capstone project. The Township maintains an interactive map of all trails and trailheads on its website. A copy of the trailhead map has been added to the appendix of this report.



- f. Farm Stands and Community Farm Markets: There are a number of successful farm stands in Readington. There are several successful farm markets in the Township, including: Vacchiano Farm, Schaefer Farms, and the Readington River Buffalo Farm. More recently the community has expressed interest in the concept of a popup market to give local farmers an opportunity to sell directly to residents in Whitehouse Station.





g. New Educational Opportunities:

- Readington Township contains a very successful Community Garden at its Dobozyński Farm Park. Participants of all ages learn a great deal about growing food organically, and gain a new appreciation for hands on agriculture by growing and harvesting over thirty varieties of fruits and vegetables.
- In the past Readington has offered a bus tour of preserved farms. Usually held in the fall, the tour attracts a bus-load of participants who stop and learn about local agricultural operations.





- h. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA):
- Dancing Feather Farm on Cole Road is a new farm that recently sold from an old farm family. The new owners rent different plots and sections of the farm to people interested in farming. Collectively, they form a CSA. Advertising and marketing for this organization is done online.
  - Livestock Operations: There are a number of farms in Readington that raise sheep, beef cattle, turkeys, and pigs for direct market locally.





- Christmas Tree Farms: There are about six farms that direct market Christmas trees and that advertise in town and sell almost all the trees they can produce.
- Specialty Crops:
  - The Readington River Buffalo Farm sells bison meat for direct marketing.
  - The Hidden Meadows Nursery sells all manner of nursery plants to area Landscapers.
  - Dancing Feather Farm produces strawberries.
  - Misty Acre Farm produces twenty-three varieties of heirloom tomatoes.
  - Readington Brewery produces hops and barley for beer brewed on premises.
  - Vampire Hill Scapes Farm grows hemp in Readington
- i. Agricultural Education Coordination: Readington Farmers make good use of Central New Jersey's agricultural education resources.
- j. Farmer Support: Readington Township, which sits on the western boundary of heavily populated Somerset County, has a perfect location for Agricultural Tourism activities. This fact has not been lost on Readington's farmers. Each fall visitors can choose any of three large preserved farms that offer pick your own pumpkins, mazes, and haunted hay rides. Readington Township plays an important part in their success by providing a regulatory climate that allows them to attract customers with signage and to handle large numbers of participants safely without over-regulation. The Township's representatives have been supportive and helpful when issues have arisen.
- k. Readington's agricultural diversity:
  - Readington River Buffalo Farm sells bison meat.
  - Hidden Meadow Nursery sells all manner of Nursery plants to area Landscapers.
  - The Vacchiano Farm raises beef, pork, chicken and vegetables.



- Hionis Greenhouses raises a high volume of all types of annual and perennial plants for sale to large retail outlets.
- Verano, NJ is a large medical marijuana grow facility on Route 22.
- Schaeffer Farms sells baby chicks and turkey poultry, and produces sweet corn for direct marketing.
- Misty Acres Farm specializes in heirloom tomatoes, and organic vegetables.
- Dancing Feather Farm sells strawberries, and raises meat goats.
- Island farm and Buttonwood Farm raise Angus cattle.
- The Bartles Farm raises pigs and Turkey.
- Nicholson Farm and the Kowal Farm raise Hereford cattle.
- The Readington Brewery and Hop Farm raises hops.
- A number of small Readington farms raise sheep.
- There are about a half dozen farms that raise and direct market Christmas trees.
- By far the most common crop on large farms is hay, both for horses and for mushroom production in nearby Pennsylvania.
- Quite a bit of land on large tracts is dedicated to field crops, namely, field corn, wheat and soybeans.

## **B.2. Business Suppliers and Services, Processors**

### **Farm Supplies (fertilizer, pesticide, feed, seed, equipment, parts, etc.)**

- Horsemen's Outlet, Lebanon, NJ
- Tractor Supply Store, Ringoes, NJ

### **Feed**

- Somerset Grain & Feed, Bernardsville, N
- Sergeantsville Grain & Feed, Sergeantsville, NJ
- The Tack Room, Pittstown, NJ

### **Fencing**

- Amwell Fence, Ringoes, NJ
- Eagle Fence and Supply, Branchburg, NJ
- The Fence Company, Ringoes, NJ
- New Holland Fence, New Holland, PA
- Rudl Fencing, Glen Gardner, NJ
- Superior Fencing and Hole Drilling, Lebanon, NJ
- Town and Country Fencing, Lebanon, NJ



### B.3. Anticipated Agricultural Trends

a. Market Location:

- Farmers in Readington have the good fortune of being located in Hunterdon County, where they are an integral part of a thriving agricultural industry. They also benefit from being located right on the border of Somerset County, very close to populated areas. Many people find Readington a convenient location for equine facilities, agri-tourism, and for purchasing locally grown food.

b. Product Demand:

- There is a strong demand for locally grown food, keeping Readington's local market strong. In 2020 and 2021, with the onset of the Pandemic, more people showed a preference for smaller farm markets and outdoor activities. Demand for produce will likely stay strong into the future, because "buying local" and agri-tourism have become a familiar part of our culture here in central New Jersey. Large grocery chains advertise "locally grown".

c. Emerging Opportunities:

- The Vacchiano Family, experienced farmers who produce of a variety of meat and vegetable products, have recently leased the former Profeta Farms on State Highway 202 near Three Bridges. Attracted by the large farm market building with a location on a well-traveled roadway, and large fenced fields and pastures, the family has now opened the Vacchiano Farm Store.
- Dancing Feather Farm is Readington Township's newest agricultural venture. Its online presence describes a unique business model as an agricultural "incubator". Multiple small scale farmers, each interested in producing specialized agricultural products, lease their own small farm sections, and are given the opportunity to participate jointly in marketing their products through a centrally organized CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). The farm already produces an impressive variety of products and prides itself on promoting sustainable agriculture.



- Readington recently passed an ordinance allowing small scale breweries on farms at least 20 acres. The farms must grow their own hops and other ingredients, and have frontage on a major road. One Brewery on Route 202 received approval and is under construction.
- A young farmer at Vampire Hill Scape Farm has recently taken advantage of the State's changing laws and has begun producing Hemp.

#### **B.4. Agricultural Support Needs**

##### a. Agricultural Facilities and Infrastructure:

- Farmers Markets: Some Readington Farmers would benefit from additional Farmer's market opportunities nearby. In Hunterdon, we have a farmers' market, at the Dvoor Farm in Flemington, and a weekly farmers market in Stockton. Some businesses have discovered the advantage of hosting a "Pop up" market in their parking lot or in their town centers.
- Processing facilities: There are a number of small-scale farmers in Readington raising beef cows, pigs, lambs and turkeys. There is a severe shortage of butchering services in central NJ. We have one butcher in Whitehouse Station, V. Roche & Son, but this small operation gets very busy processing deer September thru February. Readington farmers use Dealaman Enterprises in Warren, NJ, or Frigit Freeze and Springtown Meats in eastern Pennsylvania.

##### b. Flexible Land Use Regulations:

- Readington has a municipal Right to Farm Law and the Township has a long history of allowing and encouraging agriculture. The right-to-farm ordinance is attached to this document.

##### c. Agricultural Representation:

- A Readington farmer, Eric Doyle, of the Readington River Buffalo Farm, has served for a number of years as the President of the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture. In addition, Readington has an active



Agricultural Advisory Committee which can assist farmers by providing information to and advocating for farmers, occasionally to mediating any Right to Farm disputes.

### B.5. Agricultural Support Implementation

- a. Farm Markets: Readington Township’s zoning ordinance identifies farm markets on private farms as an allowed use, and there are several. There are also small neighborhood farm stands that offer fresh eggs and produce.
- b. Rental Land: Readington Township makes many hundreds of acres of conservation lands, owned by the township, available to local farmers to lease for agriculture. It is commonplace that local farmers need additional acreage nearby and available for lease. This opportunity has been a key to success for a number of local farmers. This arrangement is a win-win, as the Township gets help in maintaining these open space lands.





## **VII. NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

### **A. NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION COORDINATION**

#### **A.1. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)**

Since 1935, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (originally called the Soil Conservation Service) has provided leadership in a partnership effort to help private land owners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources. NRCS employees provide technical assistance and financial assistance for many conservation programs. NRCS science and technology activities provide technical expertise in areas such as animal husbandry and clean water, ecological sciences, engineering, resource economics, and social sciences. The NRCS also provide expertise in soil science and leadership for soil surveys and for the National Resources Inventory, which assesses natural resource conditions and trends in the United States.

The local NRCS office serving Hunterdon County is located in Franklin Township. Hunterdon County farmers may utilize this local NRCS office for technical assistance with conservation issues. NRCS will also reach out directly to landowners if they know of a farmer who is in need of assistance, or can use the guidance of the NRCS staff. The local NRCS office also helps to prepare Conservation Plans for Hunterdon County farmers. An approved Conservation Plan is required to be in place within one year of signing the deed of easement for those farmers who sell a development easement via any state farmland preservation program, or apply for natural resource conservation program grants such as the WHIP and EQIP. The local NRCS office administers these conservation program grants, which offer financial incentives to support Conservation projects, including stream riparian buffers and wildlife habitat.

Most Readington farmers with sizeable farms have approved Conservation Plans on file and have done work to implement them. Many are enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) program and benefit from annual payments.

#### **A.2. Soil Conservation Districts**

The Hunterdon County Soil Conservation District (SCD) provides technical services, including animal waste management, design and construction of erosion control structures and Integrated Pest Management. The SDC also assists in developing farm conservation plans and ensure projects are necessary and feasible. Applications are





forwarded to the NJ State Soil Conservation Committee, which recommends projects to the SADC for funding approvals. The Hunterdon County SCD gives final approval on all Conservation Plans and program contracts. Although the services of the NRCS for the implementation of the Conservation Plan are cost free to the farmer, the services of the SCD may be needed to complete the implementation of the plan and this work is billable as the SCD is a separate entity from the NRCS.

In Hunterdon County, the Soil Conservation District also routinely monitors preserved farms once a year to ensure compliance with the deed of easement due to the manpower involved. The SCD then reports back annually to the CADB with the status of all property.

Readington Township works closely with the Soil Conservation District as well as its own Environmental Commission and consultants during development reviews at the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment reviews to assure that negative impacts of nonagricultural developments on natural resources is minimized.

Most farmers that own the larger farms in Readington Township have applied for and received grants from the Natural Resource Conservation Service funded by the federal government. It is less common for Readington farmers to make use of the State's Soil and Water Conservation Grant Program, first because the program only pays 50% of cost, and in recent years has been under funded by the State.

## **B. NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAM**

### **B.1. SADC Soil and Water Conservation Programs**

The SADC provides grants to eligible landowners to fund up to 50 percent of approved soil and water conservation projects. Farms must be permanently preserved or enrolled in an eight-year program to be eligible for the grants. Examples of eligible projects include: terrace systems, diversions, stream protection, water impoundment reservoirs, irrigation systems, sediment retention, erosion or water control systems, drainage systems, animal waste control facilities, agri-chemical handling facilities and land shaping or grading. Readington Township needs to make its farmers more aware of these programs; however, there has been a recent lack of available funding for this program.



## **B.2. SADC Deer Fencing Grant Program**

The SADC provides cost-share grants to eligible farmers for the installation of high-tensile woven wire deer fencing on permanently-preserved farms. The grants may cover up to 50% of the costs of materials and installation, and they may not exceed \$200/acre or a total grant of \$20,000. The applicant must be an established farmer. If the applicant is a cooperative, corporation, partnership, or joint operation, it must be primarily engaged in farming, i.e., the applicant entity must derive over 50% of its gross income from all sources from its farming operation. The farmland on which the deer fencing is to be constructed must be owned by the applicant and be permanently preserved. The fenced area must be completely enclosed by deer fencing that meets the specifications, and it must be maintained for and have a lifespan of at least ten years. Applicants must attend an SADC deer fence training installation session or watch the SADC deer fence installation training video prior to installing the fence.

Two farms in Readington Township have made use of this program:

- Misty Acres Farm; a 128 acre preserved farm on Hillcrest Road, which operates a local farm stand, and sells a variety of vegetables, specializing in a large selection of Heirloom Tomatoes. With the help of this program, the farm obtained deer fencing for approximately 3 acres.
- Dancing Feather Farm; A 72 acre preserved farm on Cole Road, has used the program to fence two acres for vegetable production and for the protection of a recently planted orchard featuring hazelnut trees. The farm is planning to operate as an Incubator Farm and as a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).

## **B.3. Federal Conservation Programs**

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP): This program provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to farmers/producers for conservation practices that address natural resource concerns, such as water quality. Practices under this program include integrated crop management, grazing land management, well sealing, erosion control systems, vegetative filter strips/riparian buffers, animal waste management facilities and irrigation systems.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP): Under CREP, farmers voluntarily remove cropland along streams, lakes and wetlands from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation to provide buffers. These



conservation buffers slow and absorb runoff, sediment, nutrients, and chemicals from cropland while also creating beneficial wildlife habitat for many species in need.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP): The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement. At least one Readington Township Farm has been partially funded through this program.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) Grants: In the early 2000's Readington received over \$60,000 in grants on Township owned lands. Readington was the most active Township in Hunterdon County in applying for Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) Grants and implementing conservation measures through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) when that was made available to municipalities. Conservation measures were installed on Township owned land using approximately \$60,000 in grants for such measures as wetland enhancement, riparian restoration, invasive species control and native warm grass plantings through.

### **B.3. NJDEP Landowner Incentive Program**

Readington Farmers need additional information on this and other similar programs and the Agricultural Advisory Committee is planning to host an information meeting on the subject for Township farmers.

### **B.4. Other Programs**

Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service: Rutgers continues to assist local farmers, enhancing their market potential and assists them in using best management practices.

## **C. WATER RESOURCES**

### **C.1. Supply Characteristics**

The majority of Readington Township depends on individual wells and ground water resources for most of its water needs. Only certain areas of Whitehouse Station and



Three Bridges (specifically the sewer service areas) are serviced by New Jersey American Water. Most agricultural irrigation uses streams and ponds.

The Township's major concern regarding future water supply relates to the quality of ground water resources. This is true for both future uses which continue to rely on individual wells and those for whom New Jersey American Water or other water supply companies provide services using deep production wells or surface water. Proper steps must be taken to insure that residential or commercial development does not jeopardize the aquifer's ability to recharge and supply the Township with the necessary potable water.

Groundwater drawn from wells continues to be the primary source of potable water for residents of Readington. The principal threat to Readington's groundwater quality is the contamination that can occur from nitrates contained in effluent from septic disposal fields. High concentration of nitrates may lead to eutrophication of lakes and estuaries. Extremely high concentrations can cause health problems, especially in infants. Future development should ensure that groundwater supplies are not subject to degradation by nitrate contamination.

Protection of the potable water supply is of critical importance in land use planning, particularly in rural areas, which rely on groundwater from relatively shallow wells. State and County policies strongly support planning for water quality purposes.

### **C.2. Agricultural Demand and Supply limitations**

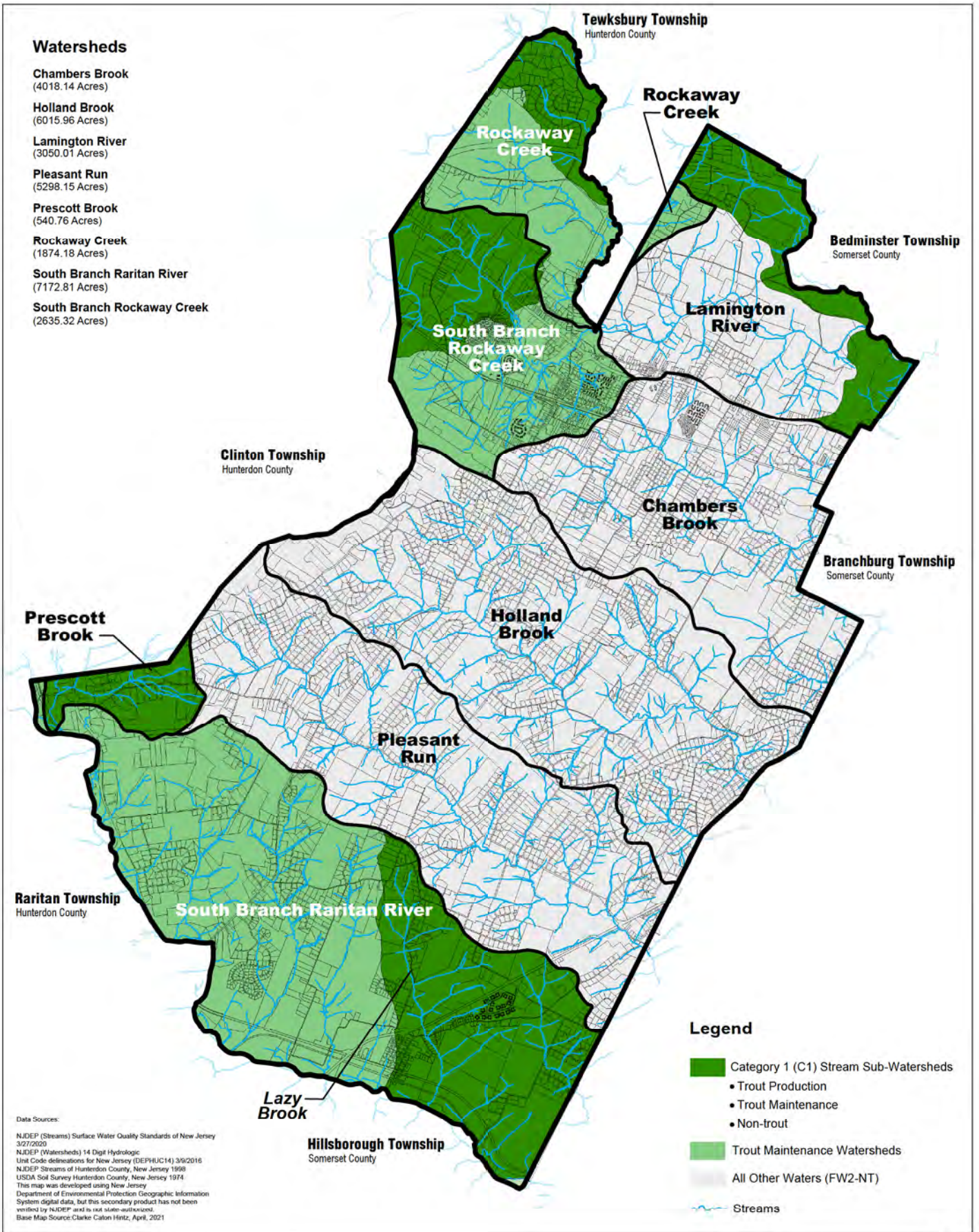
Readington Township does not anticipate future water availability problems for agriculture for several reasons. One is water availability. Readington sits atop soils designated as Brunswick Shale, a highly productive aquifer. The second reason is that Readington's zoning strong protection for this groundwater aquifer. The zoning only allows very low-density residential development. The zoning also requires mandatory clustering of housing in the large residential and agricultural sections of the Township, meaning that land disturbance that negatively impacts ground and surface water resources will be kept to a minimum.

### **C.3. Conservation and Allocation Strategies**

Readington's rural and environmental planning policies, its open space preservation strategies and its recently updated Storm Water Control ordinance are all designed to help conserve and protect water resources, both surface water and ground water.

## Watersheds

- Chambers Brook**  
(4018.14 Acres)
- Holland Brook**  
(6015.96 Acres)
- Lamington River**  
(3050.01 Acres)
- Pleasant Run**  
(5298.15 Acres)
- Prescott Brook**  
(540.76 Acres)
- Rockaway Creek**  
(1874.18 Acres)
- South Branch Raritan River**  
(7172.81 Acres)
- South Branch Rockaway Creek**  
(2635.32 Acres)



Data Sources:  
 NJDEP (Streams) Surface Water Quality Standards of New Jersey 3/27/2020  
 NJDEP (Watersheds) 14 Digit Hydrologic Unit Code delineations for New Jersey (DCH/UC14) 3/8/2016  
 NJDEP Streams of Hunterdon County, New Jersey 1998  
 USDA Soil Survey Hunterdon County, New Jersey 1974  
 This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not state-authorized.  
 Base Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz, April, 2021

## Legend

- Category 1 (C1) Stream Sub-Watersheds
  - Trout Production
  - Trout Maintenance
  - Non-trout
- Trout Maintenance Watersheds
- All Other Waters (FW2-NT)
- Streams





## **D. WASTE MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

The Hunterdon County Solid Waste Plan, initiated in 2008, set forth the range of materials to be recycled and detailed the responsibilities of residents, commercial and industrial entities, schools, and local governments in achieving the goal of diverting at least 50% of the County's solid waste from the solid waste stream. Readington took this responsibility seriously, and through its curbside recycling program, which uses the services of a private contractor, it has been extremely successful in meeting its goal.

Readington Township is home to a number of large equine operations that generate sizeable amounts of manure. Where necessary, Readington has initiated a dialogue with the farm managers to assure adherence to best management practices. The majority of the large equine facilities use private contractors to dispose of their manure. This is cost effective because of the large mushroom farms in eastern Pennsylvania that recycle the manure in their operations.

Another option available to farmers in the community are Manure Management Plans that can be prepared with assistance from the Natural Resource Conservation Service of the USDA. Manure Management Plans divert animal waste products from landfills and use the manure for nutrient management on-farm. Onsite usage reduces haulage on local roads, prevents water pollution from improper storage and disposal, offsets chemical fertilizer usage and helps farm profitability by reusing a waste product

## **E./F. ENERGY CONSERVATION PLANNING, OUTREACH AND INCENTIVES**

A fair number of Readington Township farmers have taken advantage of subsidies available for the installation of solar arrays over the past decade. In July of 2009, Readington Township held a "Solar Seminar" to better inform Readington residents and farmers about the State and Federal subsidies available at that time. The timing is right, in 2021, for the Township to plan another information session. It is anticipated that with the climate crises upon us, state grants and federal subsidies will soon be increased. The Township is generally very supportive of alternate forms of energy generation as an ancillary use on farms, and the Township's zoning ordinance should be examined to see that it reflects that support.



## **VIII. AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY, RETENTION AND PROMOTION**

### **A. EXISTING AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY SUPPORT**

#### **A.1. Right to Farm**

To ensure farmers have the ability to continue accepted agricultural operations, the Right to Farm Act was enacted by the State Legislature in 1983 and amended in 1998. The Act provides “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 conflicting interests of all lawful activities in New Jersey.”<sup>6</sup>

Readington Township’s Right to Farm Ordinance was modeled directly after the State’s model ordinance, with the exception that Readington Township’s ordinance did not repeat lists of examples. Although it is slightly briefer, it is essentially the same ordinance as the State recommended. The Township’s Right to Farm ordinance is attached at the end of this document as Appendix C.

Farmers in Readington Township have occasionally needed formal mediation to resolve problems between farmers and their neighbors. Several years ago, the CADB heard the neighbor’s complaints regarding Hionis Greenhouses, which had opened a retail market on their Coddington Road site. Generally, however, when an issue has come up, the Township Committee and members of the Agricultural Advisory Committee have been able to resolve the problem. The key to resolving difficulties, or not having them arise in the first place, has been to make sure that the Township’s Planning Board, and the Township’s zoning officials have a good understanding of the Right to Farm Act.

#### **A.2. Farmland Assessment**

Farmland Assessment law has been, and still is, critical to the future of agriculture in the State of New Jersey. In the last decade, there were slight changes to the Farmland Assessment law. The minimum income was revised upward from \$500 for the first acre, to \$1,000, simply adjusting for inflation. The Farmland Assessment law continues to be vital to agricultural viability in Readington.

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<sup>6</sup> NJ Right to Farm Program



## **B. OTHER STRATEGIES**

### **B.1. Permit Streamlining**

Costs of building permits on agricultural buildings are calculated at a reduced rate.

### **B.2. Agricultural Vehicle Movement**

Agricultural vehicle movement is generally adequate throughout the Township. Few, if any, conflict have been reported.

### **B.3. Agricultural Labor Housing**

Agricultural housing exists on some farms in Readington and historically they have been approved when a need is demonstrated. It is not proven to be necessary for most Readington farms, however.

### **B.4. Wildlife Management Strategies**

- a. Deer control: A serious concern for Readington farmers is the problem of the excessive deer population. Readington hosts one of the highest densities of deer in the State. Readington farmers have adapted. Most rent their farm to hunt clubs, and have installed deer fencing where absolutely necessary. The high deer population is one reason that a predominant crop is grass hay rather than the more vulnerable grains. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for grains such as corn, soybeans, and rye to be included in a rotation, and deer damage does take a heavy toll on these crops. Readington Township has responded by leasing its large open space tracts to insured hunters, putting the contracts out to bid annually. The Township recently implemented an individual permit program designed to get hunters on many of the smaller open space parcels in order to help control the herd. Private landowners are also encouraged to have hunters on their property.
- b. State and County Lands: There are two State Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) in Readington, which attract many deer hunters from outside the local area. There is a 500 acre WMA along the Raritan River near Three Bridges and a 230 acre WMA along the Lamington River on the Township's northern boundary. Hunterdon County owns hundreds of acres of





conservation land in Readington as well, and allows hunting on suitable tracts using a lottery and permitting process.

## **B.5. Agricultural Education and Promotion**

- a. The Readington News: This free monthly newspaper is mailed out, free, to all residents and is currently our Township's best way of communicating. The Township reserves an entire page for municipal news, and articles can be submitted by residents. Local farmers are able to use this paper to advertise their products and their ag-tourism events. The Agricultural Advisory Committee can educate residents about Readington's agriculture and Farmland Preservation Program.
- b. Open Space Walks: Another popular program that serves as an educational tool for teaching citizens about the farms and the farmland preservation program in Readington Township is the Open Space Walks. For almost three years now, the Readington Open Space Committee has organized an "Open Space Hike" on different trails each month on the third Sunday afternoon of the month, and the hikes are very popular. It is become the norm to have 30 to 40 persons participating and often times these hikes are in close proximity to private farms and over open space that is being farmed. The walks provide an opportunity for members of the Township Open Space and Agricultural Advisory Committees to explain the Townships Farmland Preservation Program and to talk to residents about the agriculture on neighboring farms.
- c. Farm Tours: In the past, Readington has sponsored a bus tour of preserved farms. This was a very successful way of showing off Readington's preserved farms and talk to residents about its viable agriculture. The tour is able to highlight how many farms we have, where the farms are, and the incredible variety of products they produce. It also provides a pleasant way to introduce residential neighbors to farm neighbors.
- d. Township website: Readington has recently given much publicity to the Township's Deer Management Program. Overpopulation of deer is a problem shared by residents and farmers alike, and Readington is publicizing the need for both the Township, by leasing open space lands, and the private landowners to work together to manage our deer problem.



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## CONCLUSION: READINGTON'S SUPPORT OF AGRICULTURE

The aforementioned Right to Farm Ordinance is an active example of Readington Township's support of agriculture. In addition, Readington has instituted within in its zoning ordinance valuable provisions that serve to protect, preserve and support agriculture, including a provision that new residential developments approved next to an agricultural use must be buffered, and that the deeds of the new residential properties must acknowledge the adjoining agricultural use. In 1998, Readington created the Agricultural Residential (AR) Zone which includes Readington's ADA, which allows only low-density residential development and requires a mandatory cluster. In the AR zone, development is required to be clustered on 20% of the land and 80% must be set aside for agriculture and open space purposes. This accomplishes two purposes. It protects valuable farmland, which in Readington is largely comprised prime soils and soils of Statewide Importance, and it protects other natural resources such as the ground water supply of the Township. It also reduces the interface between residential boundaries and agricultural land, where problems can occur. Keeping overall population density low in agricultural areas helps to minimize the conflicts between farmers and other residents, and keeps rural roads safer for farmers driving farm equipment.

Without the pro-active efforts dating back over 40 years and the very successful farmland preservation program administered by Readington Township, as well as the support of the Hunterdon County Farmland Preservation Program and the incredible funding made available by the Garden State Preservation Trust, the agricultural land base and the agricultural industry it supports would have certainly disappeared in Readington Township by the year 2021. The fact that this is not the case and that so much of Readington's valuable farmland has been preserved is important to both the agricultural industry in Hunterdon and the agricultural industry in the State. Readington makes up 10% of Hunterdon's land mass and Hunterdon is one on the most important agricultural counties in New Jersey. In addition, the soil quality and the quality of the farms throughout Readington are exceptional, when compared to others, not just at a County level, but also on a State level.

The fact that Readington now has over 70 preserved farms, resulting in the protection of approximately 4,900 acres of the Township's land base, has without a doubt been the single most important reason that the future of agriculture in Readington Township is secure.



Clarke Caton Hintz

Readington has the best of the attributes of what has made New Jersey the “Garden State.” That is, a critical mass of high quality farmland close to population centers, and land blessed with ample rain and groundwater resources. Many preserved farms are still owned by experienced farm families that were able to retain their farms in the family because of the Farmland Preservation Program. Other farmers that have bought their farms more recently were only able to buy farms because of the farmland preservation program. The importance of the past successes and the need to continue with farmland preservation cannot be overstated.





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## APPENDIX A: PROJECT AREA SUMMARY FORM



## County Planning Incentive Grant PROJECT AREA SUMMARY FORM

Project Area: Primary  
Municipality: Readington Township  
County: Hunterdon

**1. PROJECT AREA INVENTORY:** *(See N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.5(a)1)*

**i. Targeted Farms**

*Add additional rows as needed.*

*Note: Farms granted final approval or pre-acquired by the County without SADC involvement should be included in the target farm inventory, in addition to the additional corresponding inventory, if SADC cost share contribution will be sought.*

Owner / Farm Name (if known)	Municipality	Block	Lot	Acres
Quick Chek Corp.	Readington	9	23	72
Buttonwood Beef	Readington	9	24	19.56
Barchi Land Holdings	Readington	10	16 & 18	42.74
Lamington River Farms	Readington	11	10	33
Lamington River Farms	Readington	12	16	100.62
Betty Durling	Readington	13	4	55.51
Dean Durling	Readington	13	5	29.36
Durling	Readington	13	58	27.2
Della Pello	Readington	14	3, 3.02	31.7
Baron/Barrettstown Joy Farm	Readington	14	51	85.5

Lyle Armstrong	Readington	15	6	31.59
Marilyn Herr	Readington	44	18, 54	62.57
Despotov	Readington	46	7	60
Wachendorf	Readington	46	20	103.5
John Pascale	Readington	48	22.03	50
Bruce Wales	Readington	48	24	65.66
Paul Sauerland	Readington	49	2	47.16
WJMD	Readington	50	1	19.44
Jagel/Cayero	Readington	50	16	18.55
Charles Perry	Readington	52 46	24 14, 14.02	92.58
Wilmark	Readington	55	21.01	37
Ellen Casserly	Readington	57	12	62.6
Wanda Szatynski	Readington	62 72	5 28	43.38
Lackland & Lackland	Readington	64	26	109
Lackland & Lackland	Readington	64	40	151
Herman Pfauth	Readington	64	31.03	29
Patrick Orlando	Readington	65	7	23.78
Steffie D'Ambola	Readington	66	31	29.27
Maltese-Possumato/Cheswick	Readington	73	22	50.41
Pleasant Run LLC	Readington	75	19	81

Pleasant Run LLC	Readington	75	30	152
Pleasant Run LLC	Readington	75	30.02	111
Barbara Bemelmans	Readington	83	1 & 2	64
Barbara Bemelmans	Readington	93	3	26.76
Hisko, Glenn & Cynthia	Readington	93	5 & 6	39.79
John Corbin	Readington	96	4	26
Ochs/Pierce	Readington	97	1	49.31

Total Acreage of Targeted Farms:

2133.54 ac

**ii. Farms with Municipal, County and/or SADC Final Approval:**

*Add additional rows as needed.*

Owner / Farm Name	Municipality	Block	Lot	Acres
Floyd Saums	Readington	74	4	55
Daniel/LeCompte/Khalsa Ji LLC	Readington	94	11	52.68

Total Acreage of Farms with Municipal, County or SADC Final Approval:

107.68 ac

**iii. Preserved Farmland**

*Add additional rows as needed.*

Owner / Farm Name	Municipality	Block	Lot	Acres
Emmet	Readington	12.01	15	34
Hamewith/Greifeld	Readington	13	62	82
E. Schley/Island Rd LLC	Readington	14	1	104
John Schley2/Island Road LLC	Readington	14	1.01	20
John Schley	Readington	14	50	87

Reeve Schley	Readington	15	1	100
Reeve Schley	Readington	15	1.02	61
Arnaudy/Someday Stables	Readington	15	4	26
Cuchiaro	Readington	39	14	25
Peters	Readington	39	49	65
Silver Bit & Spur	Readington	45	10	41
Paul Reno/Grumpy LLC	Readington	46	22.01	70
Hrubesh	Readington	52	10	79
Romano/Kowal	Readington	52.01 46	14 21	110
Somerset Hills Handicapped Riding Ctr/Freeman	Readington	53	5.02	23
Dolan/Dodge	Readington	53	9	21
Wade/BLN LLC	Readington	53	22	131
Wallendjack/Allen	Readington	55 66	12 & 9 48	93
Kappus	Readington	55	8	51
Scanlon	Readington	55	17	41
Scanlon	Readington	55	17.02	44
James	Readington	56	5	19
Schultz/Readington	Readington	57	2	48
Staats	Readington	57	13.01	53
Jackson/Doyle	Readington	62	1	33



Dobozynski/Doyle	Readington	62	4 & 7	231
Accetola	Readington	63	13	64
Chesla	Readington	64	29	41
Bauer-Cole	Readington	64	44	126
Little	Readington	65	12 & 12.01	32
Hanna	Readington	65	23	24
A.Reno/Readington	Readington	66	2	52
Dabrowski	Readington	66	17	36
Allen	Readington	66	24	125
Moore	Readington	66	45 & 45.01	68
Cole	Readington	67	12	23
Stuart Keane/Doyle	Readington	70	38.5	88
Pagano	Readington	72	10.02	33
Schaefer's Acres LLC	Readington	72	11	90
Schaefer's Farm LLC	Readington	72	23	128
Bartles	Readington	72	5, 5.02	95
Rica II/Readington	Readington	75	19.01	39
Saqa, Hanna J Estate	Readington	75	33	116
Jones	Readington	75	35 & 40	52
Saronno/Mada Farms	Readington	80	1	58

Miller/Davidson	Readington	93	12	41
Burjan/11 Higginsville Rd LLC	Readington	93	13	105
B.Mason/Nifimy Farms LLC	Readington	93	18 & 20	158
B.Mason/Nifimy Farms LLC	Readington	93 95	19 13	85
Burjan/Profeta	Readington	93	28	137
Readington/Toll/Egbert	Readington	94	17	28
Readington/Toll/Little Hills	Readington	94	19	83
Triple D LLC	Readington	96	2	45
D'Urso/Pimenta	Readington	96	18	79
Padovanni	Readington	98	2	30
S.Kanach/VanDoren	Readington	98	3	219

Total Acreage of Preserved Farmland:

3,992 ac

**iv. Other Deed Restricted Farmland**

*Add additional rows as needed.*

Owner / Farm Name (if known)	Municipality	Block	Lot	Acres
Renda	Readington	13	57	70
Reeve Schley	Readington	15	3, 3.01, 3.02	50
Csepi/McClune	Readington	20	11	27
DiGeronimo	Readington	20	16,22,23	65
Jensen	Readington	22	6	25
Burgher/Garfield	Readington	50	14	23

Knocke/Spillane	Readington	55	21	25
Lachenmayr	Readington	55	13	32
Spring Meadow	Readington	64	8	55
Vizzoni/Kania	Readington	73	17	124
Hrynyk/Maga Farm LLC	Readington	73	26.01	121
Saronno/Nicholson	Readington	74	5	12
Lazy Brook Estates/Liesch	Readington	74	26.01	51
Kanach/Saronno/Chesla	Readington	74	27	82
Lane/Sweerink/Amtmann	Readington	75	32	49

Total Acreage of Other Deed Restricted Farmland:

811 acres

**v. Farms Enrolled in the Eight-year Farmland Preservation Program or Municipally-Approved Farmland Preservation Program**

*Add additional rows as needed.*

Owner / Farm Name	Municipality	Block	Lot	Acres

Total Acreage of Farms Enrolled in the Eight-year Farmland Preservation Program or Municipally-Approved Farmland Preservation Program:

0

**vi. Other Preserved Open Space Compatible with Agriculture**

*Add additional rows as needed.*

Owner	Municipality	Block	Lot	Acres	Description of Use
State of NJ	Readington	13	57.02	15	Rockaway Creek Greenway
State of NJ	Readington	14	3.04	19.5	Rockaway Creek Greenway

State of NJ	Readington	14	3.03	16.7	Rockaway Creek Greenway
State of NJ	Readington	15	27	230	Lamington River Greenway WMA
State of NJ	Readington	73	27	64.6	South Branch WMA
State of NJ	Readington	74	7	354.3	South Branch WMA
State of NJ	Readington	74	9	7.5	South Branch WMA
State of NJ	Readington	79.01	11	20.3	South Branch WMA
State of NJ	Readington	79	3	36.3	South Branch WMA
State of NJ	Readington	93	7	10	Raritan River Greenway
Hunterdon County	Readington	72	2	88.1	Raritan River Preserve
Hunterdon County	Readington	72	31	104.2	Deer Path Park, Recreation
Hunterdon County	Readington	98	8	10	Raritan River Preserve
Readington Township	Readington	13	21	19.7	Rockaway Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	13	31	26.7	Rockaway Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	13	34.01	20.6	Rockaway Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	13	54	31.8	Rockaway Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	39	14.02	13.2	Chambers Brook Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	45	10.02	19.7	Holland Brook Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	45	26.07	7	Holland Brook Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	46	5.07	16.7	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	46	5.99	38.8	Recreation/Conservation

Readington Township	Readington	46	10.99	35.8	Holland Brook Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	46	22.04	10.4	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	46	24.9	12	Holland Brook Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	50	13	21.45	Pleasant Run Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	50	14.01	4	Pleasant Run Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	50	32.01	.5	Pleasant Run Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	50	41	68.7	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	52.01	13.9	33.3	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	52.01	14.06	72.2	Pleasant Run Greenway
Bergold	Readington	52.01	22	3	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	55	1.9	1.6	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	55	1.91	14	Recreation/Conservation
Readington Township	Readington	55	1.92	45.9	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	55	7.09	25	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	55	13.51	50.6	Holland Brook Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	55	21.02	15	Holland Brook Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	55	23.03	51.5	Recreation/Conservation
Readington Township	Readington	64	41	27.7	Pleasant Run Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	66	3	10.6	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	66	13	65	Pleasant Run Greenway

Readington Township	Readington	66	25.99	63.6	Holland Brook Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	66	49.11	2.9	Conservation Open Space
P. Reno	Readington	66	53	5	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	72	36.99	69.3	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	72.01	34.9	7.7	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	73	6.14	25.8	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	73	20.01	35.4	Raritan River Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	73	20.02	0.45	Raritan River Greenway
Readington Twp/Saums	Readington	74	4.05	50	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	75	15.01	14.12	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	75	16.02	19.5	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	75	17.90	35.2	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	75	18	48.5	Recreation Land
Readington Township	Readington	75	29	.3	Pleasant Run Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	75	32.03	5.01	Pleasant Run Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	83	3	4.5	Raritan River Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	93	1	23	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	94	8	143.7	Conservation Open Space
Readington Township	Readington	96	18.03	30.6	Pleasant Run Greenway
Readington Township	Readington	97	2.03	10.6	Conservation Open Space

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Total Acreage of Other Preserved Open Space Compatible with Agriculture: 2,334.13 acres

**SUM OF ii., iii., iv., v. & vi. ACREAGE** (Note: Target Farm acreage (i) excluded) **7244.81**

**2. AGGREGATE SIZE OF THE PROJECT AREA:** 16,774.3 Acres

(See N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.5(a)2)

**3. DENSITY OF THE PROJECT AREA:** (See N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.5(a)3)

Density Formula:

(Sum of ii., iii., iv., v. & vi acreage) / (Aggregate size of the Project Area)

$$\text{Density} = 7244.81 / 16,774.3 = 43 \%$$

**4. TARGETED FARM SOIL PRODUCTIVITY:** (See N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.5(a)4)

Soil Productivity Formula:

(Total area of important farmland soils on targeted farms) / (Total area of the targeted farms)

$$\text{Soil Productivity} = 1,692 / 2133.54 = 79 \%$$

Note:

- Important farmland soils are prime, statewide and unique soils
- Unique soils will only be considered if they are being used for special crops
- Attached is a list of soils considered statewide important only when drained. When these soils are present please confirm the presence of drainage before making soil calculations.

Total area of the targeted farms: 2133.54 acres

Area of prime soils on targeted farms: 927 acres; 43 % of total area

Area of statewide soils on targeted farms: 765 acres; 36 % of total area

Area of unique soils on targeted farms: 0 acres; n/a % of total area

**5. ESTIMATE OF EASEMENT PURCHASE COST ON TARGETED FARMS:** (See N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.5(a)5)

The SADC cost share formula can be found at N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.11(d)

Add additional rows as needed.

Municipality	Acres	Estimated Easement Price per Acre	Total Estimated Easement Price	Estimated Municipal Cost Share ___%	Estimated County Cost Share ___%	Estimated State Cost Share ___%	Estimated Cost Share ___% from Other Sources
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Readington	2133.54	12,000	25,602,480	3,840,372	5,120,496	15,361,488	1,280,124
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**TOTALS**

Total Acreage	Total Estimated Cost for Targeted Farm Easement Purchase	Total Estimated Municipal Funding	Total Estimated County Funding	Total Estimated State Funding	Total Estimated Funding from Other Sources
2133.54	\$25,602,480	\$3,840,372	\$5,120,496	\$15,361,488	\$1,280,124

**6. MULTI-YEAR PLAN TO PURCHASE DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS ON TARGETED FARMS:**

*(See N.J.A.C.2:76-17.5(a)6)*

Year	Acres	Estimated Cost	Municipal Funds	County Funds	State Funds	Other Funding Sources	Total Estimated Funding
1	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000
2	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000
3	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000
4	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000
5	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000
6	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000
7	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000
8	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000
9	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000
10	100	1,200,000	180,000	240,000	720,000	60,000	1,200,000

S:\Planning Incentive Grant -2007 rules County\Forms\Digital Forms\Project Area Summary-County.doc





Clarke Caton Hintz

## **APPENDIX B1: HUNTERDON CADB PLANNING INCENTIVE GRANT CRITERIA**

**Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board  
Farmland Preservation Program  
County Planning Incentive Grant Criteria  
9/13/07**

The Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) adopted the following criteria on September 13, 2007 for reviewing County PIG applications in accordance with the Agricultural Retention and Development Act N.J.S.A. 41C-11 et seq. The summary of the criteria with their relative weights is shown below. For more information on the rules and regulations governing County Planning Incentive Grant criteria, please contact the CADB office at 908-788-1490.

**Summary**

A. Factors which determine the degree to which the purchase would encourage the survivability of the municipally approved program in productive agriculture. (N.J.S.A. 4:1C-31b.(3))	
1.0 SOILS	Weight 30
2.0 BOUNDARIES AND BUFFERS	Weight 20
3.0 LOCAL COMMITMENT	Weight 13
4.0 SIZE AND DENSITY	Weight 24
5.0 SOIL CONSERVATION AND FARM PRACTICES MANAGEMENT	Weight 18
B. Degree of imminence of change of the land from productive agriculture to nonagricultural use (N.J.S.A. 4:1C-31b.(3))	Weight 6
C. Ranking process for preliminary approval	n/a
D. Exceptions	Weight +3 to -25
<b>Total Weight:</b>	<b>89 to 114</b>

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**County Planning Incentive Grant Criteria**

**A. Encouraging the Survivability of Productive Agriculture**

1.0 SOILS - Weight 30

**NOTE: Any application receiving a soil score less than 10.0, will be assessed a five point deduction from its soil score.**

Formula:

% Prime soils x 30	=
% Statewide soils x 20	=
% Unique soils x (0 or 25*)	=
% Local Soils x 10	=

Total weight = the sum of the categories

*\*If a designated 'unique' soil is not being used for its unique purpose, no points will be assigned.*

2.0 BOUNDARIES AND BUFFERS - Weight 20

The weights reflect differences in the permanence of agricultural buffers and the effectiveness of other buffers in reducing the negative impacts of nonagricultural development.

The following weights have been assigned:

1. Deed restricted farmland (permanent)	20 points
2. Deed restricted wildlife areas, municipal, county, or state owned parcels	18 points
3. Streams (perennial) and wetlands	18 points
4. Cemeteries	16 points
5. Parks (passive recreation)	14 points
6. Military installation	14 points
7. Golf Course (public)	14 points
8. Eight year programs and EP applications	13 points
9. Highways (limited access)/Railroads	10 points
10. Farmland (unrestricted)	6 points
11. Woodlands	6 points
12. Parks (high use)	5 points
13. Residential developments (less than six acre lots)	0 points
14. Commercial	0 points
15. Industrial	0 points
16. Schools	0 points
17. Other (Value determined on a case by case basis)	0 points

Formula: The weight of each buffer is multiplied by its percentage of the entire perimeter of the farm. All of the individual scores are totaled for a final score.

3.0 LOCAL COMMITMENT - Weight 13

Priority will be given where municipal, county, regional and state policies support the long term viability of the agricultural industry. Factors indicating support:

- 3.1 Municipal actions that promote agricultural preservation and agricultural viability.
- a. Farm businesses/agritourism are promoted in the municipal master plan (1 point)
  - b. Municipality has previously approved eight year programs. (1 point)
  - c. Development easements have been purchased in the municipality. (1 point)
- 3.2 There is sewer or other growth leading infrastructure serving the premises.
- Yes \_\_\_\_\_ (0 points)
- No \_\_\_\_\_ (1 point)
- 3.3 Right to Farm Ordinances
- The Right to Farm Ordinance requires a developer and/or landowner who plans to build or sell a dwelling in an agricultural area to inform through their agent, prospective purchasers of the existence of the Right to Farm Ordinance and the protection it grants to agricultural operations. This notification is included in the deed and recorded. (4 points) (Liaisons are required to provide a copy of the ordinance).
- 3.4 The municipality actively supports the reduction of animal damage to farmland by having an animal damage control plan or other means to control wildlife damage. (0 to 5 points)
- The municipality shall identify all municipally owned parcels, greater than 5 acres, by block and lot number and explain the type of animal damage control plan for each parcel (if applicable).

4.0 SIZE AND DENSITY - Weight 24

Individual applications are scored on both size and density with a maximum score of 12 points awarded for size and a maximum of 12 points awarded for density for a maximum total combined score of 24.

4.1 Size (12 points)

Points are based on the size of each individual application relative to average farm size in the respective county according to the latest U.S. Census of Agriculture. Points will be awarded for size up to a maximum of 12 as follows:

$$\text{Points Awarded} = 12 \times \frac{\text{Size of individual application}}{(2 \times \text{county average farm size})}$$

*The factor '2' encourages counties to enroll farms above average in size.*

4.2 Density (12 points)

The density score will be awarded based on the following:

The application which is not reasonably contiguous (within one-half mile linear distance) with another development easement purchase application approved by the Board and received by the Committee, lands where development easement have already been purchased, other permanently deed restricted farmlands, farmland preservation programs and municipally approved farmland preservation programs in the project area will receive (0) points. One point (1) will be allocated for each reasonably contiguous (within one-half mile linear distance) farmland preservation program or municipally approved farmland preservation program. Two (2) points will be allocated for each of the other above noted lands in the project area which are determined to be reasonably contiguous (within one-half mile linear distance) with the subject application and each other not to exceed a maximum score of 12 points.

5.0 SOIL CONSERVATION AND FARM MANAGEMENT PRACTICES - Weight 18

5.1 Percent of total land actively cropped or actively used for grazing  
(Percentage X 2) (Max 2 points)

5.2 Soil conservation measures, other than having land in grass and hay

- S.C. Management Plan on file (*must be filed or updated during the past 15 years up to the application deadline*) (Maximum 1 point)
- Percent of Plan implemented, or if no plan on file with district, physical evidence of on-site S.C. practices such as: terracing, tiling waterways, diversions (Maximum 3 points)
- On-site evidence of good maintenance of installed S.C. practices (Maximum 2 points)

5.3 Good farm management practices employed  
Examples: Fertilizing, liming, crop rotation, contour farming, clipping and weed control cover cropping, woodland management.  
(Maximum 5 points)

5.4 On-site investments indicating a serious commitment to continue farming (*includes permanent structures, liquid manure, nursery stock underground irrigation systems, etc. The conditions of the buildings will also be considered. Farm equipment will not be considered.*)  
(Maximum 5 points)

B. Degree of Imminence of Change - Weight 6

Although the CADB intends to avoid approving applications in areas where the likelihood of suburbanization is high; the likelihood that a farm (application) will be converted to a non-agricultural use will either receive additional points or lose points, according to its degree of imminence of change. *The degree of imminence of change is measured as follows:*

Farms with less than 50 feet of road frontage	points	-5
Farms with difficult access, such as steep slopes, streams or any other environmental constraints that affect access to the parcel	-2 points	
Farms with preliminary subdivision approval	points	+3
Farms owned by an estate or institution and/or filing for bankruptcy	+3 points	

C. Ranking Process for Preliminary Approval

The CADB reserves the right to give special considerations to applications in order to accomplish program objectives. This may alter the numerical ranking of the applications. A copy of the program objectives are available at the CADB office.

D. Exceptions - Weight +3 to -25

Severable Exceptions

Exceptions are portions of an applicant's property not included in the easement purchase application. In general, the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board discourages severable exceptions. Factors for determining if there is an adverse effect to the applicant's agricultural operation are as follows:

- severability potential from the premises
- number requested
- size
- percent of premises
- right to farm language
- negative impact on the agricultural operation

No negative points are assessed if the severable exception is for open space purposes.

Criteria for Severable Exceptions

Points

Each severable exception requested	-5 points
The severable exception exceeds the minimum lot size for a dwelling	-1 point each lot
The landowner restricts the severable exception to only one residential unit	+1 point
Total severable exception acreage exceeds 5% of the tract acreage	-1 point
Right to farm language required on the deed of the exception	+1 point

X **If the CADB determines that the severable exception has a significant negative impact on agricultural productivity, the CADB reserves the right to limit or deny the exception.**

## NONSEVERABLE EXCEPTIONS

### Criteria for Nonseverable Exceptions

The CADB encourages nonseverable exceptions around existing dwellings and principal farm buildings. Nonseverable excepted areas are not separate lots but simply a designated area on the farm that does not receive farmland preservation funding and is not subject to the restrictions in the deed of easement. Nonagricultural uses, in accordance with municipal zoning, would be permitted within this area. The CADB will allow only one per application.

Nonseverable exception around dwelling and principal farm buildings +3 points

If the applicant requests a nonseverable exception on a property that has no dwelling and is not eligible for an RDSO, the CADB encourages such an exception. There is no effect on the application's score. 0 points

*For more information, please contact:*

Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board  
County Administration Building #1  
PO Box 2900  
Flemington, New Jersey 08822-2900  
908.788.1490  
[www.hunterdon.nj.us/cadb.htm](http://www.hunterdon.nj.us/cadb.htm)



## APPENDIX B2: SADC ELIGIBLE FARM MINIMUM



# Eligibility for Farmland Preservation

12/10/2019

NEW JERSEY  
State Agriculture Development Committee

## APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY

- This application is not being considered in any other farmland preservation program at this time.
- The Municipality, Board, or County has not owned title to the land for more than three years.
- The landowner has not rejected an offer for an amount equal to or greater than the certified market value under any farmland preservation program within the past 2 years. (This provision applies only to an application from the same landowner for the same farm.)
- The application is located within an adopted Agricultural Development Area.
- The application is a targeted farm within the County's or Township's approved Planning Incentive Grant Project Area. **Project Area:** \_\_\_\_\_
- The subject farm is eligible for farmland assessment.

## LANDOWNER ELIGIBILITY

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.18(z) an applicant or the applicant's immediate family defined as applicant's spouse, child, parent, or sibling residing in the same household cannot be a current CADB board member or Municipal Agriculture Advisory Committee member at the time of application to sell their development easement.

1. Are you or anyone in your immediate family a current member of the CADB?  **YES**  **NO**
2. Are you or anyone in your immediate family a current member of a Municipal Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC)?  **YES**  **NO**
3. Are you or anyone in your immediate a current member of the Township Committee or Board of Chosen Freeholders?  **YES**  **NO**

**If Yes,** Position \_\_\_\_\_ Term \_\_\_\_\_





## MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Pursuant to [N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20](#),

The land must exhibit development potential based on the following standards:

- (1) The municipal zoning ordinance for the land as it is being appraised must allow additional development, and in the case of residential zoning, at least one additional residential site beyond that which will potentially exist on the farm.
- (2) Where the purported development value of the land depends on the potential to provide access for additional development, the municipal zoning ordinances allowing further subdivision of the land must be verified. If access is only available pursuant to an easement, the easement must specify that further subdivision of the land is possible. To the extent that this potential access is subject to ordinances such as those governing allowable subdivisions, common driveways and shared access, these facts must be confirmed in writing by the municipal zoning officer or planner.
- (3) If the land is 25 acres or less, the land shall not contain more than 80 percent soils classified as freshwater or modified agricultural wetlands according to the NJDEP wetlands maps <http://njogis-newjersey.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/2012-land-use-land-cover-wetlands>. If the DEP wetlands maps are in dispute, further investigation and onsite analysis may be conducted by a certified licensed engineer or qualified wetlands consultant and/or a letter of interpretation issued by the NJDEP may be secured.

\_\_\_\_\_ % soils classified as freshwater or modified agricultural wetlands.

- (4) If the land is 25 acres or less, the land shall not contain more than 80% soils with slopes in excess of 15% as identified on a USDA NRCS SSURGO version 2.2 or newer soils map.

\_\_\_\_\_ % soils with slopes in excess of 15%.

If the land does not meet any of the standards above, is it eligible for allocation of development credits pursuant to a transfer of development potential program authorized and duly adopted by law?     **YES**     **NO**

**FOR LANDS LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO 10 ACRES** the land also must meet the criteria below to be eligible for preservation with SADC funding:

- The land produces agricultural or horticultural products of at least \$2,500 annually. Supporting documentation must be provided (tax forms, receipts, etc.)
- At least 75% of the land is tillable or a minimum of 5 acres, whichever is less. \_\_\_\_\_ % or \_\_\_\_\_ ac
- At least 75% of the land, or a minimum of 5 acres, whichever is less, consists of soils that can support agricultural or horticultural production. \_\_\_\_\_ % or \_\_\_\_\_ ac

**FOR LANDS GREATER THAN 10 ACRES** the land also must meet the criteria below to be eligible for preservation with SADC funding:

- At least 50% of the land or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, is tillable. \_\_\_\_\_ % or \_\_\_\_\_ ac
- At least 50% of the land or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, consists of soils that can support agricultural or horticultural production. \_\_\_\_\_ % or \_\_\_\_\_ ac



# References



NEW JERSEY  
State Agriculture Development Committee

## CONTACTS

Please don't hesitate to contact the Regional Acquisition Coordinators with any questions

(609) 984-2504 or SADC emails are [firstname.lastname@ag.nj.gov](mailto:firstname.lastname@ag.nj.gov)

- Northwest (Warren & Hunterdon): Stefanie Miller [stefanie.miller@ag.nj.gov](mailto:stefanie.miller@ag.nj.gov)
- Northeast (Sussex, Passaic, Bergen, Morris, Somerset, Middlesex, Mercer, Burlington & Monmouth): Amy Mandelbaum [amy.mandelbaum@ag.nj.gov](mailto:amy.mandelbaum@ag.nj.gov)
- South (Camden, Gloucester, Cape May): Cindy Roberts (acting) [cindy.roberts@ag.nj.gov](mailto:cindy.roberts@ag.nj.gov)
- Southwest (Atlantic, Ocean, Salem & Cumberland): Katie Mazzella [katie.mazzella@ag.nj.gov](mailto:katie.mazzella@ag.nj.gov)

## REFERENCES

**SADC REGULATIONS AND POLICIES** <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rules/>

- Minimum Eligibility Criteria N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20(c), -6.23 (a), 6.20(d), -17.4(a)
- Residual Dwelling Site Opportunities (RDSOs) N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.17
- SADC Policy: Exercising a Residual Dwelling Site Opportunity
  - <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rules/p31RDSOpolicy.pdf>
- SADC Guidance Library: <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/publications/guidance.html>

## GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

- Exception Areas: <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/publications/exceptionsSign.pdf>
- Non-agricultural Uses: <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/publications/nonag%20usesonepagerVsignoff.pdf>
- Division of Preserved Land: <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/publications/divisionSign.pdf>
- Septic Policy (P-49): <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rules/pol49.pdf>
- Access to Exception Areas [https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rules/P41%20\\_Access%20to%20Exception%20Areas\\_.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/rules/P41%20_Access%20to%20Exception%20Areas_.pdf)

## **MAPPING RESOURCES**

<https://www.njmap2.com/>

## **APPRAISAL RESOURCES**

<https://njdasadc.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/appraisals/appraisalresources.html>



## APPENDIX C: RIGHT TO FARM ORDINANCE

**§ 116-1. Right to farm recognized.**

The right to farm is hereby recognized to exist in Readington Township on commercial farms (as defined by the State Agriculture Committee [SADC]) where permitted by the Land Development Ordinance<sup>1</sup> and where the operator is conducting activities that are consistent with, and covered by, approved management practices (AMP) or site specific management practices as approved by the SADC.

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1. Editor's Note: See Ch. 148, Land Development.



Clarke Caton Hintz

## **APPENDIX D: READINGTON TOWNSHIP HIKING AND EQUESTRIAN TRAILS MAP**

# Readington Twp. Hiking and Equestrian Trails Map

Open Space Advisory Board – November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## Readington Township Trails

1. Cushetunk Woods (Van Horne Dr.)
2. Cushetunk Nature Preserve Loop (937 US 22 East)
3. Whitehouse Greenway (Old Highway)
4. Senior Walkway (Cor. Railroad & James)
5. Cushetunk Mountain (Pickell Park)
6. Lachenmayr (Roosevelt Rd.)
7. Bouman-Stickney Loop (114 Dreahook Rd.)
8. Stanton Round Mtn. Loop (Stanton Rd.)
9. Dobozyński- Round Mtn. Loop (Woods Church Rd.)
10. The River Trail (Deer Path Park, W.Woodschurch Rd.)
11. Cole Rd Greenway –West (Cole Rd.)
12. Cole Rd. Greenway – East (Cole Rd.)
13. Pleasant Run Greenway (Pleasant Run & Hoagland Rds.) and Arman's Trail ext. (End of Van Neste Rd.)
14. Lazy Brook Greenway (Summer Rd.)
15. Forest Hill (Forest Hill Dr.)
16. Holland Brook Headwaters (Dreahook Rd.)
17. Summer Rd. Park Paved Mile Loop
18. Chambers Brook Preserve – Gallo Trail (Ridge Rd.)
19. Rocky Road Trail (Indian Purchase)
20. Saums Farm Trail (Rockafellows Mill Rd.)
21. White Oak Trail (Coddington Rd)

## Hunterdon County Trails

22. Cushetunk Mtn. Res. (106 Old Mountain Rd.)
23. Round Mtn -Buell Trail (100 Foothill Rd.)
24. Deer Path Park Pathways (W. Woodschurch Rd.)
25. So.Branch-Woodfern (Higginsville Rd)
26. So.Branch-Wings (Deer Path Rd)
27. Park HQ - Arboretum (1020 Highway 31)
28. Park HQ - Furnas Section (Stanton-Lebanon Rd.)
29. So.Branch Res-Stanton Sta. (30 Stanton Sta. Rd.)
30. Echo Hill Park (41 Lilac Drive)

## Nearby Trails

### Somerset County

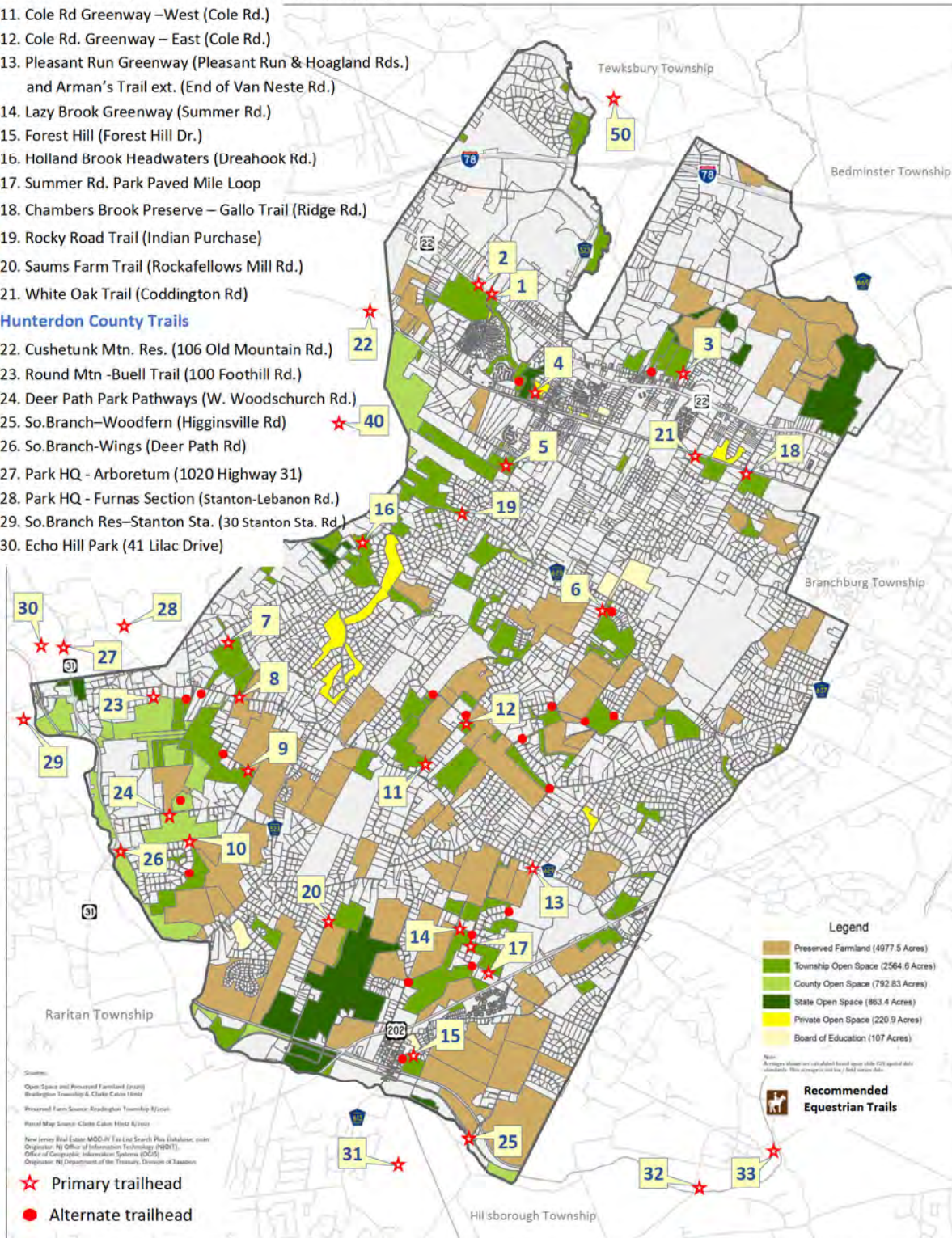
31. Clover Hill Park / So Branch WMA (19 Clover Hill Rd.)
32. South Branch Preserve - Blackpoint Rd, Neshanic Sta.
33. South Branch Preserve – Elm St, Neshanic Sta.

### State of New Jersey

40. Round Valley Rec Area (Lebanon-Stanton Rd.)

### Tewksbury Township

50. Whittemore Wildlife Sanctuary (Rockaway Rd., Oldwick)



Source:  
 Open Space and Preserved Farmland (2020)  
 Readington Township & Clarke Caton Hintz  
 Preserved Farm, Source: Readington Township (2020)  
 Parcel Map Source: Clarke Caton Hintz (2020)  
 New Jersey Wild State MDC-AV Tax Use Search Plus Database, 2020  
 Originator: NJ Office of Information Technology (OIGIT)  
 Office of Geographic Information Systems (OGIS)  
 Originator: NJ Department of the Treasury, Division of Taxation

Note:  
 An acreage change was calculated based upon 2020 GIS spatial data  
 available. This acreage is not to be used for legal purposes.



Clarke Caton Hintz

**APPENDIX E: TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT DATES IN THE  
HISTORY OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION IN READINGTON,  
HUNTERDON COUNTY AND NEW JERSEY**



- 1964: The Farmland Assessment Act of 1964 granted preferential property tax assessments to farm properties.
- 1978: Readington Township became the first municipality in New Jersey to hold a local Referendum for Farmland Preservation and Open Space.
- 1979: Readington Township's first Open Space Master Plan was published. This Plan was accompanied by a planning report which suggested a variety of implementation techniques to preserve farmland, including easement purchasing and clustering.
- 1980: Hunterdon County residents approve first ever farmland preservation bond issues.
- 1981: State of New Jersey residents approve the first statewide farmland preservation bond issue.
- 1983: New Jersey Right to Farm Act is adopted.
- 1983: New Jersey Agriculture Retention and Development Act is adopted.
- 1985: Farmland Preservation Program begins in Hunterdon County
- 1987: The Wallendjack Farm was the first farm in Readington Township to be preserved. It was the fourth farm in New Jersey to be preserved, and the second in Hunterdon County.
- 1988: Readington Township a mandatory residential cluster subdivision ordinance designed to preserve farmland.
- 1994: Readington Township voters passed a referendum that set aside \$.02 for every \$100 of taxpayer money for land preservation.
- 1998: New Jersey voters approved the creation of the Garden State Preservation Trust, which dedicated one billion dollars toward preservation and set a Statewide goal of preserving one million acres of land over 10 years.
- 1998: Readington's Master Plan called for the creation of the Agricultural Residential (AR) Zone. The AR Zone designated lands within Readington's Agricultural Development Area as the AR Zone and mandated clustering to preserve farmland in this area.
- 1999: The 1998 Master Plan amendment received an Achievement in Planning Award from the New Jersey Planning Officials.
- 1999: The Planning Incentive Grant Act was passed.
- 1999: Readington Township was awarded \$3.18 million for its first Planning Incentive Grant Application for farmland preservation.
- 2003: The SADC, and CADBs, drafted the *Strategic Targeting Project* to prioritize farmland preservation investments.
- 2003: The NJDA developed the Agricultural Smart Growth Plan to guide future protection and enhancement of the State's agricultural industry.
- 2008: Hunterdon County adopts its Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan.
- 2009: Readington Township adopted its first Farmland Preservation Master Plan





Clarke Caton Hintz

**APPENDIX F: LIST OF PRESERVED FARMS IN READINGTON  
TOWNSHIP BY YEAR AND ACREAGE**



Farms and Acreage Preserved by Year		
Year	Number of Farms	Acreage
1987	1	91.26
1993	2	238.5
1994	1	125.26
1995	3	360.13
1997	3	317.35
1998	4	409.75
1999	2	265.23
2000	1	22.30
2001	3	314.88
2002	5	267.27
2003	12	687.93
2004	4	294.9
2005	1	40.03
2006	4	184.34
2007	13	642.88
2008	1	26.44
2009	4	119.48
2010	1	116.16
2011	2	78.01
2013	2	90.08
2015	1	81.98
2017	2	42.32
2020	1	55
Total	73	4871.48*

\*Acreage may vary from other totals in the Farm Preservation Plan due to the data source utilized for date of preservation.