



CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPERS AND COMMUNITIES

OPEN SPACE ACCESS: PASSIVE RECREATION, POCKET PARKS, GREENWAYS / BLUEWAYS

Equitable access to open, green spaces is vital to the environmental, social, and economic life of a community. Open space provides for a healthier environment both by serving to mitigate the effects of pollution and by providing opportunities for recreation and for general enjoyment. Research has shown that children are better able to learn and people are happier and healthier when they have access to natural settings.¹ Not surprisingly, communities with ample open space are more desirable places to live and are better able to attract new residents, an important component of sprawl prevention. Similarly, green space has been shown to significantly increase property values, further adding to the economic vitality of the community.

Communities and developers seeking to enhance value and create desirable places for living and working should include an open space component in all development plans. Municipalities can and should require set asides for open space for development projects. Developers should take advantage of the increased values gained by enhancing open space access through the development process.

APPLICABLE NEW JERSEY GOALS AND TARGETS

Natural Resources

- Implement urban river initiatives that have components of public access, urban habitat and forest stewardship, restoration, acquisition and partnerships with conservation groups and local governments (DEP Action Plan)
- Undertake urban environmental quality-of-life initiatives in conjunction with local governments, local activist and community groups that establish measurable goals for two and three year achievements. (DEP Action Plan)

Open Space Preservation

- By 2008 preserve at least 1,354,000 acres (NJSSI)

Public Health

- Target DEP efforts to establish a coordinated effort on protecting the health of urban residents from environmental causes and ensure that DEP's efforts to support economic growth and redevelopment in urban areas results in improved urban environmental health. (DEP Action Plan)

Urban and Community Forestry

- Plant 100,000 trees in Trenton, Paterson, Newark, Elizabeth, Orange, Union, and Passaic
DEP web page - <http://www.nj.gov/dep/dsr/trends2005/pdfs/urban.pdf>

1. <http://www.americanforests.org/productsandpubs/magazine/archives/2002fall/perspectives.php>



SUGGESTED ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

- Create and adopt an Open Space Plan and adopt it into the Master Plan. This will help the municipality to assess existing open space and set goals for future open space acquisition.
- An open space component should be included in all site development plans. In instances where on-site open space is not a possibility the plan should identify other local open spaces that will be accessible to new residents, employees, and other occupants of new developments.
- Municipal officials should regularly ensure that dedicated open space is, in fact, being treated as open space. (In many instances building managers mistakenly believe that on-site open space is private and deny public access.)
- Work with the DEP to use Green Acres funding to protect open space.
- Look for opportunities to provide small areas of open space in the form of pocket parks or community gardens.

STATE TECHNICAL/FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Green Acres Funding - www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/trust.htm
- NJ Brownfields Redevelopment Resource Kit - www.nj.gov/dca/osg/docs/brownfieldsresourcekit.pdf

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Landscape and Human Health Laboratory at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. - www.lhhl.uiuc.edu/

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