

Bernardsville Open Space Plan Update



6/27/2013

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UPDATE TO BERNARDSVILLE'S OPEN SPACE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

In late 2012, Conservation Resources was retained by Bernardsville Borough to update the 2002 Open Space Plan, completed by Banish Associates, Inc. Our goal was to review the 2002 Plan and make changes based on additional information and increased community involvement. This update was structured in such a way as to engage the community in Open Space planning and build broad support for preserving open space and farmland in town.

Much of the 2002 Plan is still relevant today. The goals of the 2002 plan include:

- *Provide appropriate and balanced public open space and recreational facilities to preserve, and where possible, enhance the quality of life in the Borough.*
- *Assess and provide opportunities for appropriate active and passive activities to meet the needs of present and future residents of the Borough.*
- *Develop appropriate strategies for the public and private ownership and maintenance of open space and recreation lands.*
- *Promote the public acquisition and private conservation of areas of unique and exceptional recreational and scenic value.*
- *Promote public open space acquisitions and private conservation actions which preserve and protect the integrity of sensitive environmental resources and ecosystems, including but not limited to steep slopes, ridgelines, trout streams, wetlands, stream corridors, aquifers, rivers, forest and other areas of native vegetation, habitats of threatened and endangered species and unique natural systems.*
- *Promote stream corridor protection strategies that maintain undisturbed vegetation in order to protect and improve water quality, and provide wildlife corridors.*
- *Maintain high water quality in watercourses that feed streams and other surface waters in order to maintain trout and other native aquatic species.*
- *Promote regional cooperation between neighboring municipalities in order to expand the network of contiguous open space that reflects natural ecosystem patterns not limited to political boundaries.*

The goals of this plan update are:

- Engage the public in a planning process that reviews and revises the 2002 plan as needed. Utilize this process to build a constituency in Bernardsville that is excited about implementing the updated plan.
- Review existing maps and data from the 2010 Environmental Resources Inventory and incorporate this information into this plan update
- Create maps and detailed descriptions of discrete opens space, trails, and farmland preservation project areas (greenways).
- Suggest ways to link areas of protected open space both within and outside Bernardsville.
- Provide detailed information GIS maps and information on potential land preservation projects.
- Evaluate farmland preservation opportunities in town.
- Provide recommendations for funding partners.
- Provide centralized, detailed information about existing preserved public open space properties and provide this to the Borough for distribution on its website.

EXISTING OPEN SPACE IN BERNARDSVILLE:

Bernardsville has approximately 745 acres of preserved open space, broadly defined as land owned by the government or non-profit organizations for conservation and/or recreation purposes. Since Bernardsville is 13 square miles, this preserved open space, which totals a bit over one square mile, makes up about 9 % of town. This open space is owned by Bernardsville Borough, Somerset County (Little Brook Sanctuary), the National Park Service (Jockey Hollow) and three non-profit organizations (NJ Audubon, Raritan Headwaters Association, and Passaic River Coalition). There is no preserved farmland in Bernardsville, which is somewhat unusual for this region of Somerset County.

The vast majority of this open space is restricted to passive recreational use, either through ownership, deed restrictions, or DEP regulations. New Jersey Conservation Foundation and Raritan Headwaters Association own over 50 acres in conservation easements in the Borough, although these easements do not allow public access and are limited in their ability to protect natural resources in the long-run.

Approximately 56 acres of open space in Bernardsville has an active recreational component including ballfields, playgrounds, tennis courts, and other recreational facilities.

Property Name	Fee or Easement	Owner	BLOCK	LOT	Acreage
Borough Springs and Laurelwood	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	80	15	13.08
Borough Springs and Laurelwood	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	80	15.07	0.69
Borough Springs and Laurelwood	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	80	18	4.40
Charlotte Hill Tract	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	95	4.22	36.94
Claremont Field and Kuser Park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	68	4	2.30
Claremont Field and Kuser Park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	69	8	3.26
Claremont Field and Kuser Park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	69	29	0.36
Claremont Field and Kuser Park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	75	5	0.35
Claremont Field and Kuser Park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	114	1	2.84
Claremont Field and Kuser Park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	115	2	0.33
Conservation Easement	Easement	FALCON CREST 21, LLC	9	4	32.59
Dunster Squibb property	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	80	14	4.70
Dunster Squibb property	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	80	14.01	2.40
Fenwick Easement	Easement	LIU, AILI TRUSTEE	5	4	18.28
India Grave Brook Tract	Fee	PASSAIC RIVER COALITION	7	4	17.80
Jockey Hollow National Historic Park	Fee	USA C/O MORRISTOWN NAT.HIST.PARK	21	1	140.89
Jockey Hollow National Historic Park	Fee	USA C/O MORRISTOWN NAT.HIST.PARK	21	2	7.99
Jockey Hollow National Historic Park	Fee	USA C/O MORRISTOWN NAT.HIST. PARK	21	12	26.94
Little Brook Sanctuary	Fee	COUNTY OF SOMERSET	2	3	25.33
Little Brook Sanctuary	Fee	COUNTY OF SOMERSET	2	4	13.03
Little Brook Sanctuary	Fee	COUNTY OF SOMERSET	2	12	63.33
Little Brook Sanctuary	Fee	COUNTY OF SOMERSET	2	13	3.54
Little Brook Sanctuary	Fee	COUNTY OF SOMERSET	9	4.01	3.17
Moraine Crest Park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	131	11.01	6.02
Moraine Crest Park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	131	12	9.43
Nervine Park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	97	1	10.68
Peters Tract	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	17	30	33.10
Pine Street Park/ Kiwanis park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	100	4	2.89
Pine Street Park/ Kiwanis park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	114	1.01	0.41
Pine Street Park/ Kiwanis park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	115	1	0.33
Pine Street Park/ Kiwanis park	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	115	7	2.05
Polo Grounds	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	35	2	30.46
Polo Grounds	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	35	6	6.97
Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary	Fee	AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY	21	13	40.73
Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary	Fee	AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY	21	14	70.49
Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary	Fee	AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY	21	14.02	22.31
Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary	Fee	AUDUBON SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY	35	8	58.43
Whitenack Tract	Fee	BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE	93	10	12.04
William Post Natural Area	Fee	UPPER RARITAN WATERSHED ASSOCIATION	16	6.03	11.15
William Post Natural Area	Fee	UPPER RARITAN WATERSHED ASSOCIATION	31	1	10.53
				Total Acres	752.54

METHODOLOGY

In May 2010, Bernardsville completed its first Natural Resource Inventory (NRI). The maps and other data included in the NRI were evaluated for use in this open space plan update. Specifically, the NRI identifies areas of groundwater recharge, prime farmland and important soils, streams, riparian areas, floodplains, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. All of the maps included in the NRI were derived from publically available data from NJDEP. This data was reviewed by Conservation Resources to help guide this updated plan. The 2002 Open Space Plan did not have the benefit of this NRI.

In order to better understand the potential for additional open space and farmland preservation in Bernardsville, CRI inventoried all of the existing preserved open space and easements in town. We utilized digital tax records, statewide open space databases, and the Borough's Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI). We also evaluated potential open space and farmland by querying the tax records for vacant parcels and parcels that were farmland assessed.

After we compiled this data, a composite map showing both existing and potential open space was shared with the Open Space Committee. The Committee found errors on the map, which was then changed and then used in the community-based participatory workshop.

We also worked with the Open Space Committee on developing a methodology for the participatory workshop itself. The goal of the workshop was twofold. First, we wanted to gather local information about potential additional open space and farmland acquisition opportunities. Second, and more importantly, we wanted to engage the residents of Bernardsville and build a constituency excited about open space, farmland preservation and trails. The workshop served as one of the main data inputs into this plan.

PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOP AND RESULTS

On December 4, 2012, approximately 40 people attended a special meeting of the Bernardsville Borough Council, which focused on updating the 2002 Open Space Plan. After opening the meeting, Mayor Honecker turned the meeting over to Conservation Resources.

CRI presented a general introduction to the Bernardsville Open Space Plan and provided the participants with a basic primer on open space and farmland preservation planning. After the presentation, we broke the audience into four groups that were tasked to answer two questions: 1) What were their goals for open space and farmland preservation in Bernardsville? and 2) What would that look like on a map? The primer helped the participants frame their answers. The participants used large-scale paper maps to take notes and discuss various open space preservation alternatives.

The four breakout groups took about a half hour to answer these two questions. After the half hour, the groups were asked to report the results back to the entire group.

All of the groups provided suggestions about additional properties that should be preserved as well as ways the Borough could enhance “connectivity” between existing preserved open space parcels. This idea of connectivity was broad in scope and went beyond connecting open space with rustic trails. The participants felt strongly that connectivity needed to include, new sidewalks, pedestrian friendly roads, as well as development of off-road trails. Workshop participants also wanted

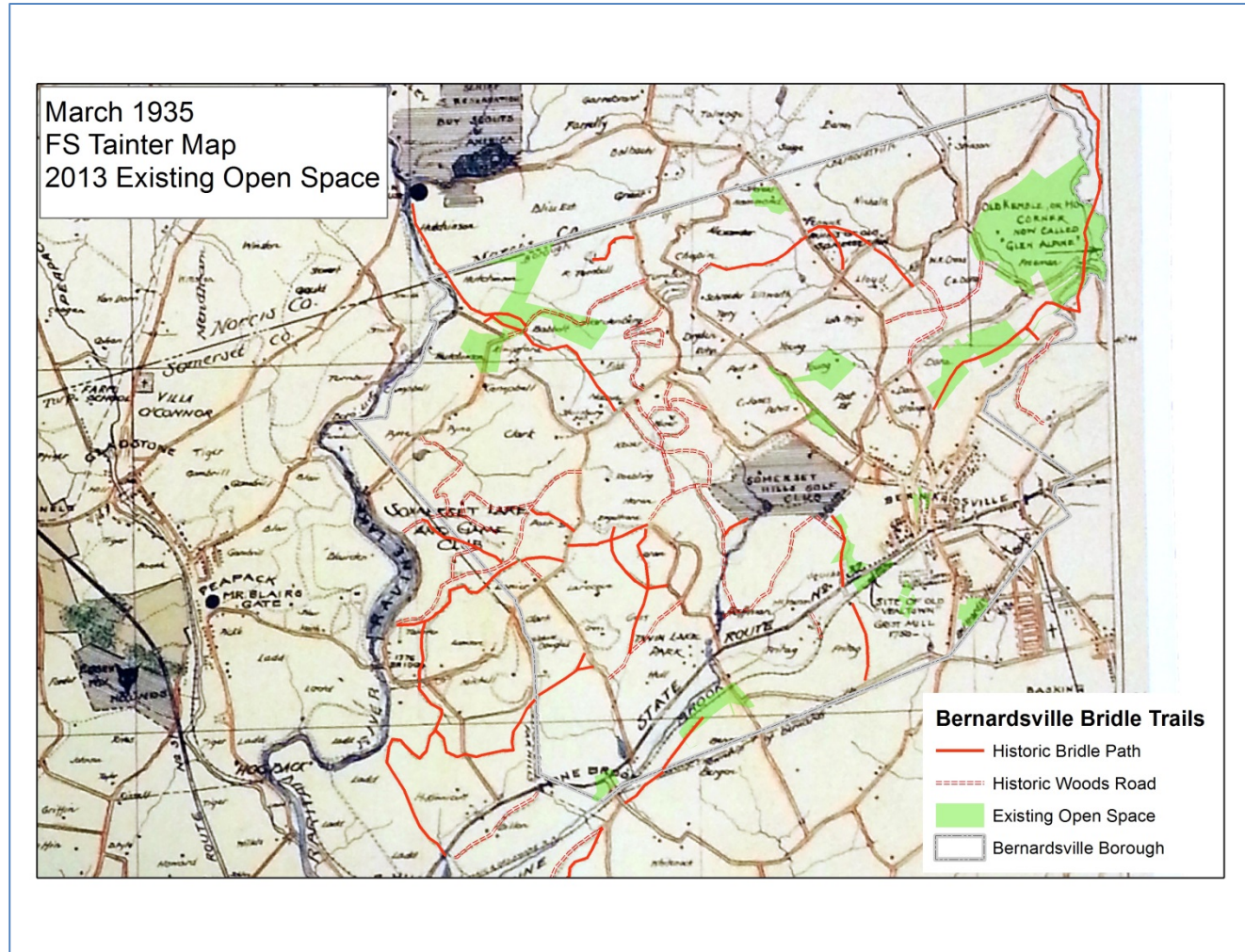


CRI to evaluate the historic bridle trail network throughout town and felt that this old trail network could serve as model to connect open spaces in town.

Specific things the participants wanted to see in the plan included:

- 1 Connect NJ Audubon’s Scherman-Hoffman Sanctuary and Jockey Hollow National Historic Park/Cross Estate with the Polo Fields and Bedwell School.
- 2 Build regional trail connections from Bernardsville to Patriots’ Path, Far Hills/Natirar County Park, and Little Brook Sanctuary and Schiff Nature Preserve.
- 3 Connect neighborhoods to existing open space through rustic trails and additional sidewalks.
- 4 Identify and create safe bike paths and bike routes.
- 5 Create information and maps about public and private parks and trails on the Bernardsville website.
- 6 Create better public access to each of the open space properties owned by Bernardsville Borough.

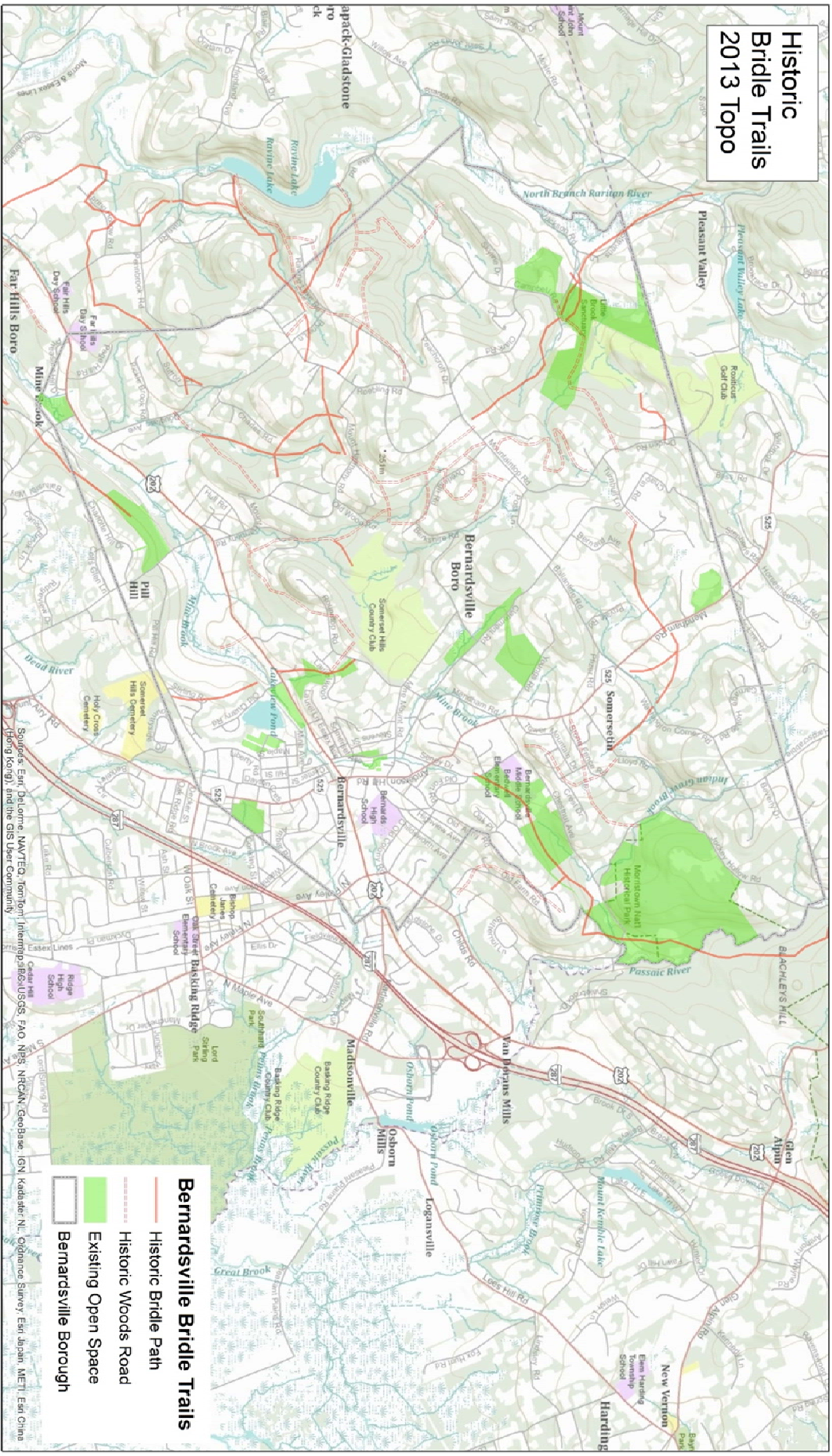
HISTORIC BRIDLE TRAILS



A network of bridle trails used to crisscross Bernardsville and connect it with the surrounding communities of Far Hills, Mendham, Peapack-Gladstone, Harding Township, and Bernards Township. For the most part, these trails were on private property and were utilized under informal agreements with the landowners. As part of this project, we digitized the 1935 map of Bridle Trails in town and compared them to the existing conditions using the GIS. We were hoping that many of these trails still exist and could be used. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be the case and many of the trails seem to have disappeared due to housing and estate development. [Please note that due to constraints on time and money, not all of the historic bridle trails identified were ground-truthed.]

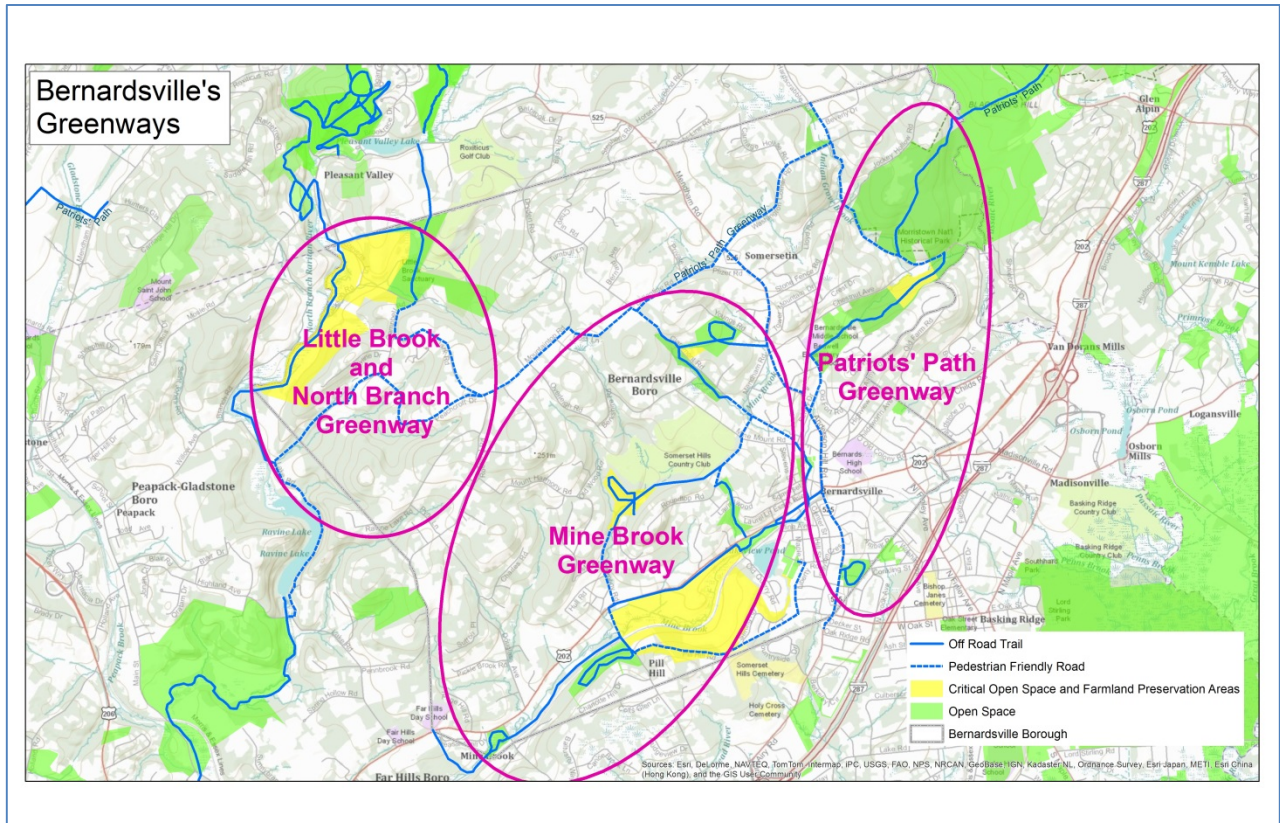
Even though very little of the bridle trail network still exists today, these historic trails serve as an inspiration to pedestrian-friendly connectivity throughout town. The historic Bridle Trails also provide a compelling vision to link the surrounding communities through trails.

**Historic
Bridle Trails
2013 Topo**



THREE GREENWAYS IN BERNARDSVILLE

It is helpful to think of the potential for a network of interconnected open space in Bernardsville in the context of greenways – swaths of preserved open space linked by trails, sidewalks, and pedestrian-friendly roads. Based on substantial public input from the participatory workshop and our analysis, we identified three greenways in Bernardsville – The Mine Brook Greenway, Patriots’ Path Greenway, and the Little Brook & North Branch Greenway. The next section describes these greenways in detail and highlights existing and potential open space and farmland preservation opportunities. It also details where opportunities for connectivity exist.



CONNECTIVITY AND TRAILS IN BERNARDSVILLE

One of the recurring suggestions in the participatory workshop was the idea of creating better connectivity in Bernardsville. There already exists a great sidewalk network that connects the densely developed neighborhoods with downtown. However, as you move away from these neighborhoods and onto “Bernardsville Mountain”, the roads narrow and there are no sidewalks. This leaves very little room for safe walking or biking.

At the same time, most of the open space properties owned by Bernardsville are not accessible by formal trails. Participants in the workshop also wanted more accessibility to these open space properties.

This plan suggests creating more “pedestrian friendly” roads to connect the various open space properties with downtown as well as connecting neighborhoods – essentially creating a trail network on the roads. Creating a more pedestrian friendly community like this can be done in various ways.

This open space plan is only a first step to identifying potential routes. This plan is meant to serve as a vision of connectivity, similar to the historic Bridle Trail network. More detailed bicycle and pedestrian planning will be necessary to determine exactly what is feasible. That said, some of the routes identified in this plan already have sidewalks and implementation of this plan would take no more than marking the sidewalks with trail signs. For example, if Patriots' Path gets extended from NJ Audubon's Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary to the Polo Fields, and then to Downtown, there are continuous sidewalks from the Polo Fields to Downtown. These sidewalks would only have to be "blazed" with small Patriots' Path signs.

Finally, this plan also suggests creating a series of off road trails that would provide access to current or future open space properties. These trails could be created and maintained relatively easily with volunteers, similar to what is already being done in surrounding communities such as Mendham, Harding, and Chester.

MINE BROOK GREENWAY

The Mine Brook and its tributaries drain a large portion of Bernardsville. It is a headwater stream of the Raritan River, which serves as a public drinking water supply source. The Bernardsville Natural Resource Inventory identifies the Mine Brook as a critical natural feature that has outstanding water quality. There is potential to acquire and preserve additional open space in the Mine Brook Greenway, thereby ensuring the maintenance of high water quality. Acquisition of open space and creation of trails would also better allow residents to enjoy the scenic beauty of the area.



CREATING BETTER ACCESS TO THE PETERS TRACT AND THE WILLIAM POST NATURAL AREA

The Peters Tract and the William Post Natural Area comprise over 50 acres of public open space situated on Claremont Road in close proximity to downtown Bernardsville. The Peters Tract is owned by the Borough and consists of hardwood forest located between Claremont Road and Mendham Road. The property has frontage on Young’s Road and Claremont Road, although access is very limited. The William Post Natural Area is owned by Raritan Headwaters Association and consists of a relatively narrow strip of land along the Mine Brook.

Several of the participants at the workshop expressed an interest in creating better access to the Peters Tract and William Post Natural Area. This could be done through the purchase of an adjoining property (Block 17, Lot 29) and creation of a small, rustic, gravel parking area off Claremont Road. Although informal trails exist on the property, a formal loop trail on the Peters Tract that starts at this proposed new parking area could be created to encourage more use. A trail that connects from the Peters Tract to Raritan Headwater Association’s William Post Natural Area should also be created.

MINE BROOK GREENWAY - PETERS TRACT AND WILLIAM POST NATURAL AREA ACTION ITEMS

- Acquire Block 17, Lot 29 as an addition to the Peters Tract.
- Create a small, rustic parking area and trailhead kiosk on Block 17, Lot 29
- Create a loop trail in the Peters Tract
- Work with Raritan Headwaters Association to create a trail on the William Post Natural Area
- Work to improve a pedestrian-friendly connection from these properties to downtown Bernardsville on Claremont Road. This will require more detailed pedestrian and bicycle planning and should be done on a town-wide basis.

Daylighting Mine Brook Park and Trail Creation
 Mine Brook Greenway



CREATING A NEW PARK IN DOWNTOWN BERNARDSVILLE – DAYLIGHTING THE MINE BROOK

One of the more unique ideas that came up in this planning process is creating a new park in downtown Bernardsville Borough by “daylighting” Mine Brook. Currently, as Mine Brook flows toward downtown it gets relegated to large underground pipes, culverts, and tunnels. Few residents even know a relatively pristine stream is flowing under Route 202 and the train station. These man-made water conduits were not large enough to hold all of the water during the severe rainfall caused by Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and a small portion of the town was subsequently flooded.

A new public park along the Mine Brook could be designed in a way that would help mitigate the flooding risk and connect downtown Bernardsville with several existing and potential open space properties. This would require a large amount of

vision and reimagining a portion of the downtown. Similar daylighting projects conducted in other parts of the country including Yonkers, New York and Salt Lake City, Utah have improved the quality of life for residents and driven economic revitalization. The daylighting would need to occur on at least ten properties, including properties owned by NJ Transit and Bernardsville Borough. For more information on the Yonkers Saw Mill River daylighting project, visit www.sawmillrivercoalition.org.

Trails in this new park would form the main stem of the Mine Brook Trail connecting the Peters Tract and the William Post Natural Area to Nervine Park further downstream.

CREATING A NEW PARK IN DOWNTOWN BERNARDSVILLE - DAYLIGHTING THE MINE BROOK ACTION ITEMS

- Conduct more detailed planning in order to determine the viability of creating a new park in downtown Bernardsville by daylighting the Mine Brook.

OPEN SPACE AROUND BOROUGH HALL

Bernardsville Borough Hall is surrounded by several parcels of open space including Borough Springs, Laurelwood and Nervine Park. These properties provide a great trails expansion opportunity as additions to the Mine Brook Trail and the Round Top Road Loop Trial.



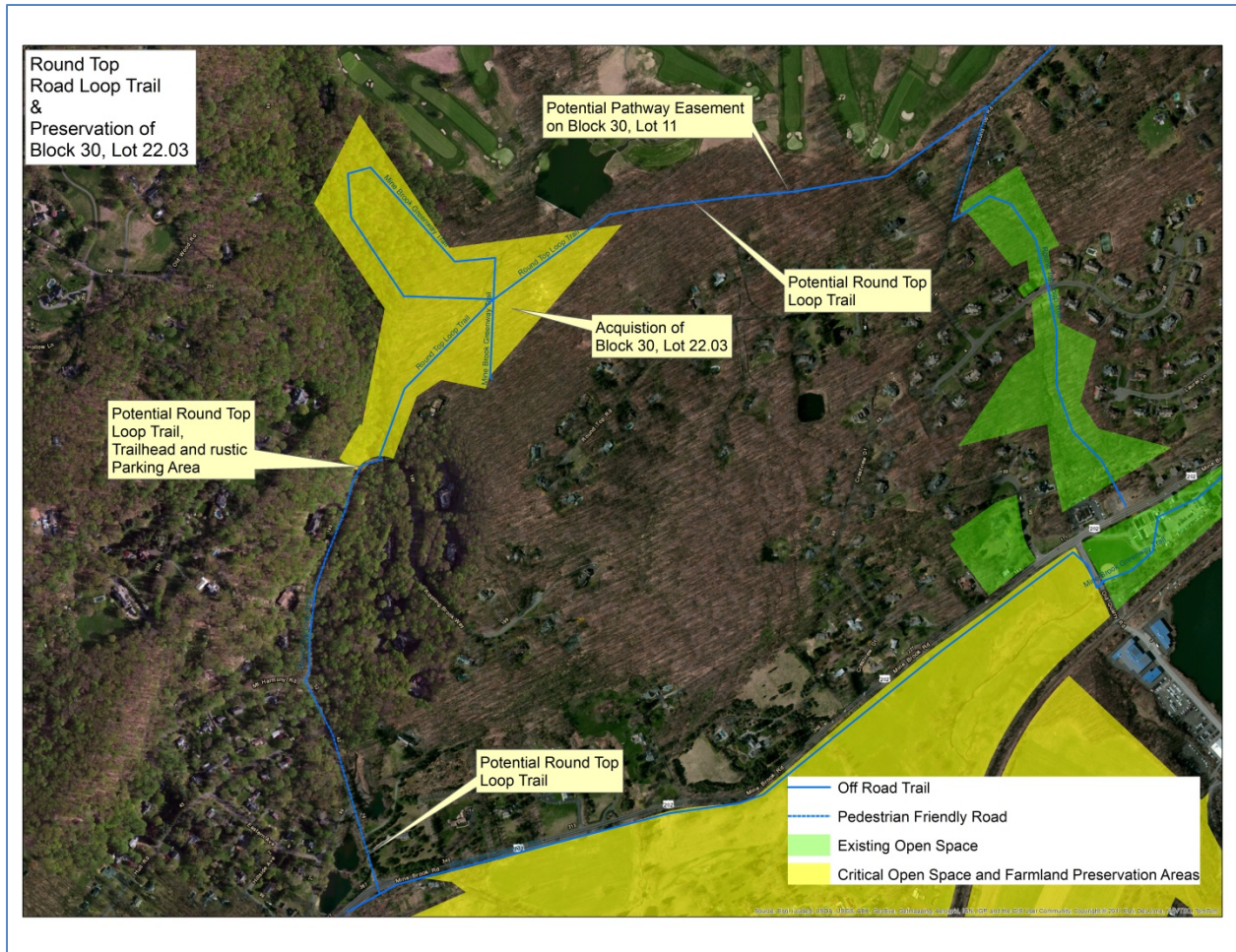
The main Mine Brook Trail could continue along the pond through Nervine Park and Borough Hall. The Mine Brook Trail would traverse Nervine Park and the small recreational ball field to the southwest of Borough Hall and could eventually connect through the large farm located to the southwest. The Round Top Road Loop Trail could begin on the Borough Springs and Laurelwood properties. Borough Springs and Laurelwood are small parcels that connect Route 202 with Roundtop Road. This trail would better connect neighborhoods off Roundtop Road and could eventually connect the Twin Lakes neighborhood with downtown Bernardsville. A crosswalk would have to be created on Route 202 to help ensure that the road crossing was safe.

OPEN SPACE AROUND BOROUGH HALL – ACTION ITEMS

- Locate and Create a trail on Laurelwood and Borough Springs Property that connects to Round Top

Road and forms part of the Round Top Road Loop Trail.

- Delineate and mark Mine Brook Trail from Nervine Park to Old Quarry Road.
- Create a safe crossing of Route 202.



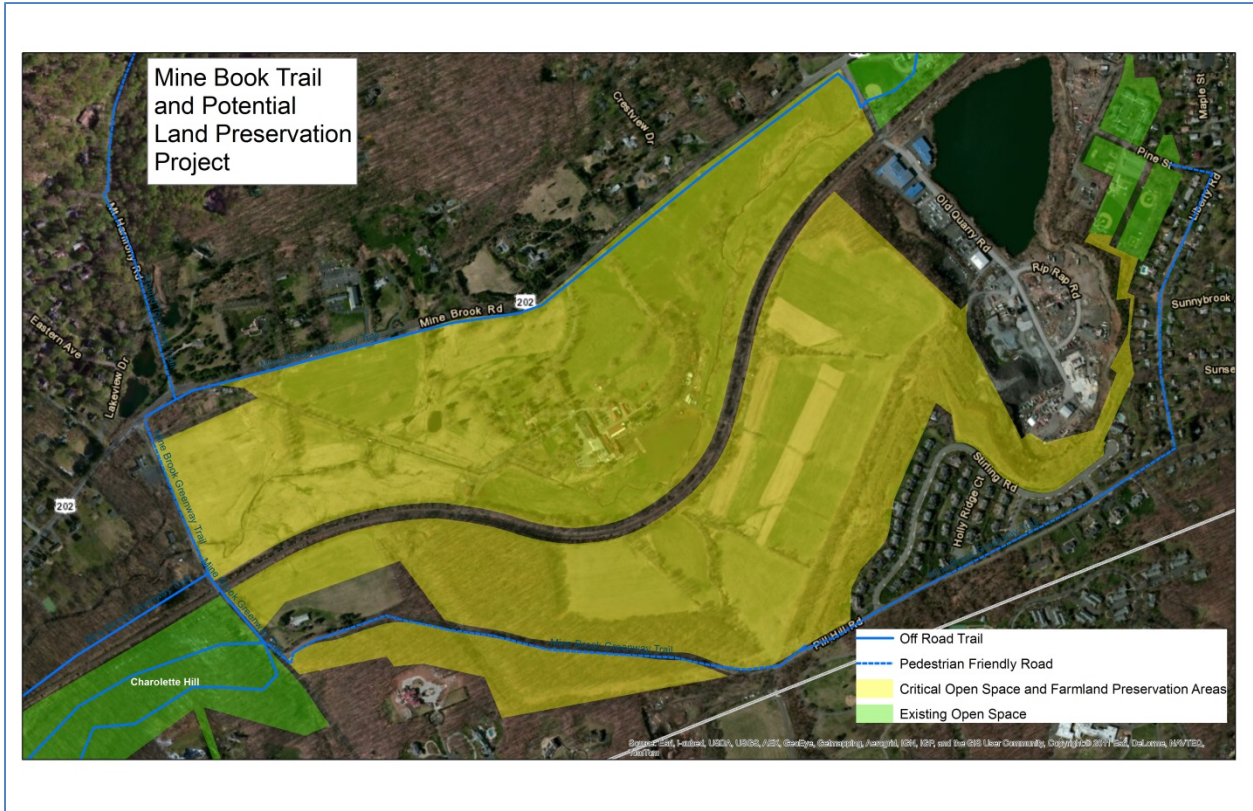
Round Top Loop Trail and Preservation of Block 30, Lot 22.03

The Roundtop Loop Trail would connect the existing open space surrounding Bernardsville’s municipal complex with the Twin Lakes and Round Top Road neighborhoods. Block 30, Lot 22.03 is a 32.6 acre wooded parcel that could form a critical link in the new Round Top Loop Trail. The heavily forested property contains a tributary to the Mine Brook and could be developed as a stand-alone passive recreational park. If this parcel were acquired and preserved as open space, the Round Top Loop Trail could be created that links the property with the Twin Lakes neighborhood.

In addition to acquisition and preservation of this parcel, there is a wooded buffer area of Block 30, Lot 11 where a pathway easement could be acquired. This would connect Block 30, Lot 22.03 with Round Top Road via an off-road trail, thereby completing the Round Top Loop Trail. Round Top road could be made more pedestrian friendly thereby enhancing the connectivity in this part of town.

ROUND TOP LOOP TRAIL AND PRESERVATION OF BLOCK 30, LOT 22.03 ACTION ITEMS

- Acquire Block 20, Lot 22.03 to create a park.
- Acquire a pathway easement on Block 30, Lot 11.
- Create the Round Top Loop Trail.



MINE BROOK TRAIL AND PRESERVATION OF LARGE FARM

The most important unprotected parcel in town from an open space standpoint is a 244-acre farm located to the south of Route 202 between Old Quarry Road and Meeker Road (Block 96, Lot 2; Block 100, Lots 1, 1.01, 1.02; Block 10, Lots 2 & 3). This bucolic farm provides a scenic gateway to Bernardsville and a link to its agricultural past. It is a major portion of the proposed Mine Brook Trail and has vast potential for both passive and active recreational use. If acquired, it could be a spectacular stand-alone park along the lines of Somerset County’s Natirar Park in Peapack-Gladstone. Preservation of this farm would also connect two Borough-owned open space properties by connecting Nervine Park and the Borough Hall complex with the Charlotte Hill Tract.

In addition to acquisition and preservation of this farm, the Mine Brook Trail could be extended up Meeker Road and Pill Hill Road to link with Kiwanis Park on Pine Street. The views from Pill Hill Road are some of the best in town, but in order to walk or bicycle safely in this area these roads would need to be more pedestrian friendly.

MINE BROOK TRAIL AND PRESERVATION OF LARGE FARM ACTION ITEMS

- Work with Somerset County to acquire and preserve the large farm property.
- Extend the Mine Brook Greenway Trail onto this large Farm Property after it has been acquired.
- Make Meeker Road and Pill Hill Road more pedestrian-friendly to enable a connection from Kiwanis Park to the Mine Brook Trail. This will require more detailed pedestrian and bicycle planning and should be done on a town-wide basis.



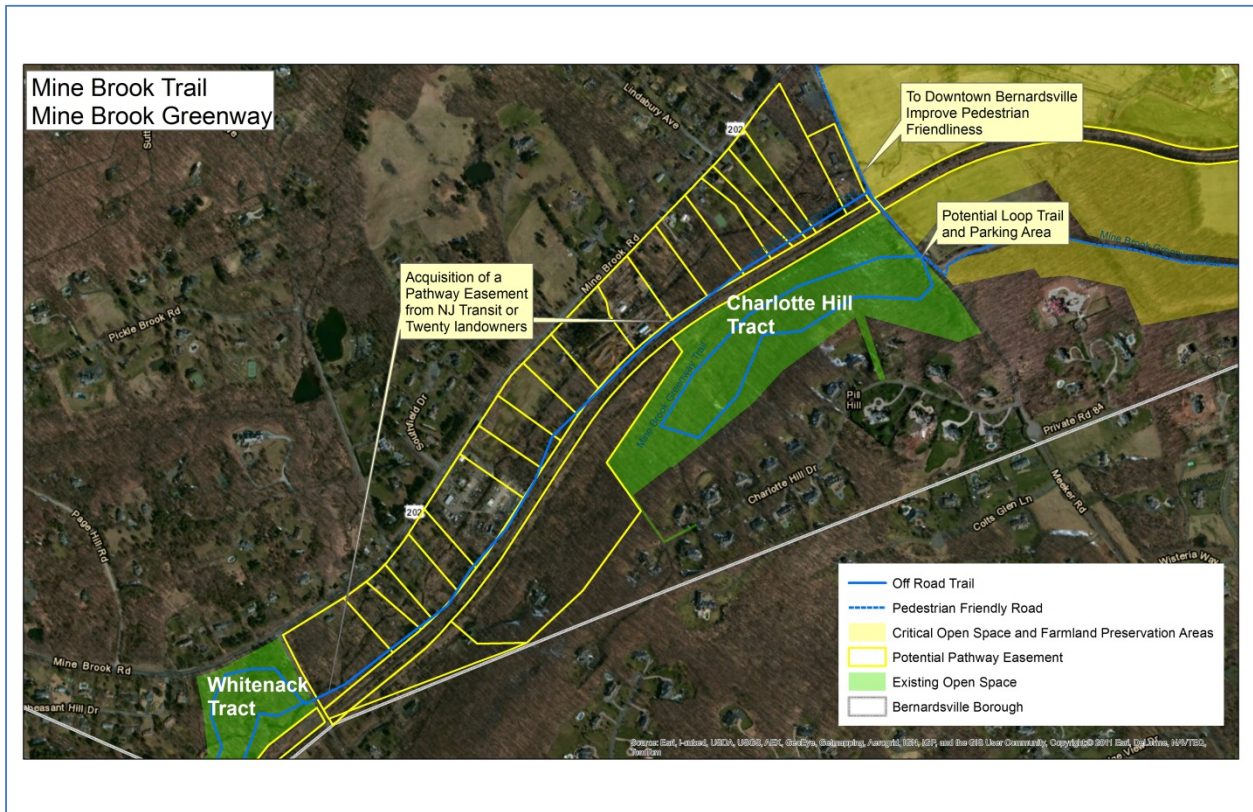
MINE BROOK TRAIL AND THE CHARLOTTE HILL TRACT

Charlotte Hill is a 37 acre tract located off Meeker Road. The property is completely forested. The northern portion of the property borders the NJ Transit rail line and extends approximately 2,500 feet in an easterly/westerly direction. Although there is a small pull-off on Meeker Road, there currently is very little public use of this property.

If the large farm to the northeast is preserved as open space, trails linking to this property should be created. In the meantime, it is possible to create a loop trail and small parking area and trailhead on an existing pull-off on Meeker road. A loop trail would enable Bernardsville residents to enjoy this scenic property.

MINE BROOK TRAIL AND CHARLOTTE HILL TRACT ACTION ITEMS

- Create small parking area and trailhead kiosk at existing pull-off.
- Create a loop trail on the Charlotte Hill Tract.



MINE BROOK TRAIL AND ACQUISITION OF PATHWAY EASEMENTS

There are at least three options for creating a trail between Charlotte Hill and Whitenack. The first option would be to acquire a pathway easement on two parcels of private property adjacent to the southwestern boundary of Charlotte Hill. The second would be to explore the possibility of acquiring a pathway easement from NJ Transit that would be located in their existing right-of-way. The final option would be studying the twenty relatively small parcels that separate Meeker Road from Whitenack Road along the Mine Brook. A trail easement could be acquired on these parcels adjacent to the NJ Transit Rail Line.

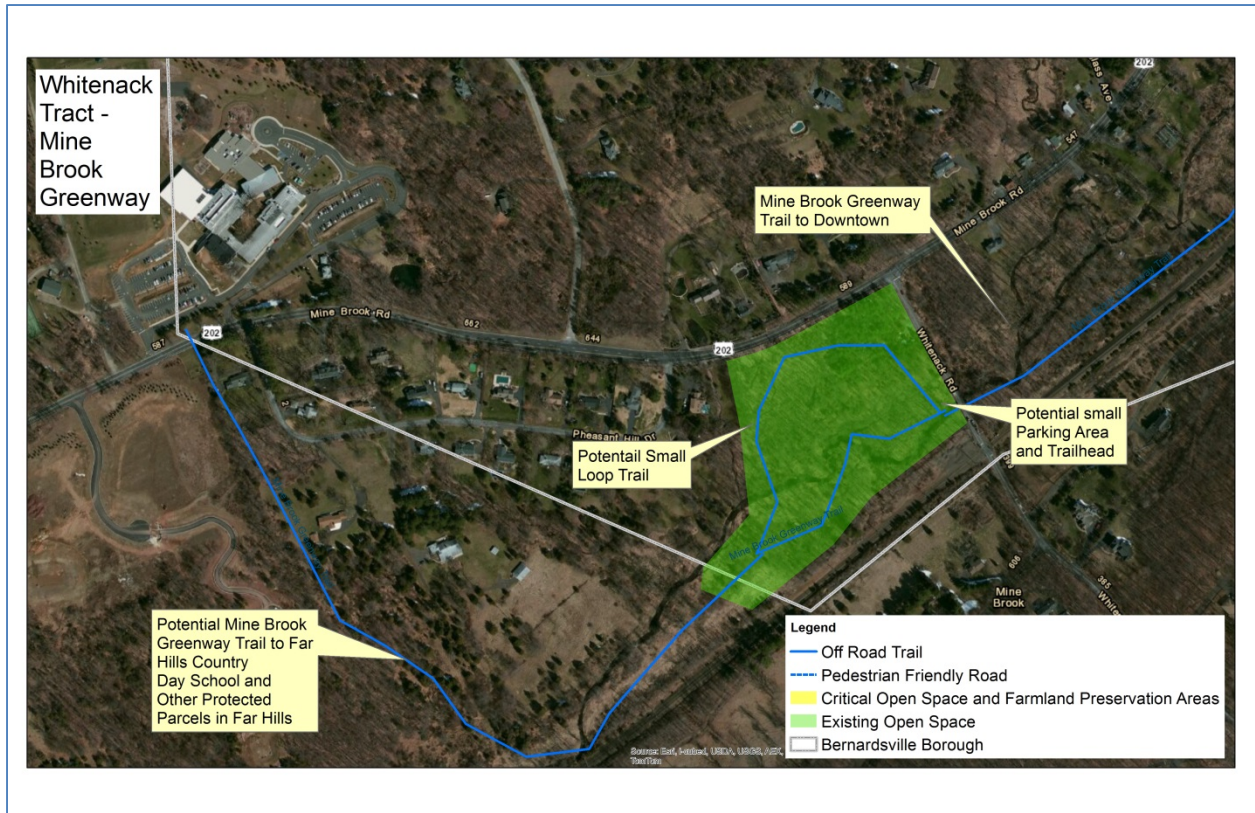
In either case, acquisition of a pathway easement, rather than the entire fee-simple purchase of these properties, would be a better way to connect Charlotte Hill with Whitenack because many of these parcels are developed with houses. These walkway easements for the most part would be separated from the houses along Route 202 by the Mine Brook, potentially alleviating any privacy concerns that residents might have.

Here is the list of Blocks and Lots where a pathway easement would have to be acquired for the Mine Brook Trail:

Private Landowners: Block 95, Lots 1 & 5; or NJ Transit: Block 144, Lot 1; or Private Landowners: Block 94, Lots 1- 10, 11.01, 11.02, 12-18, & 20 (North Side of the railroad tracks);

MINE BROOK TRAIL AND ACQUISITION OF PATHWAY EASEMENTS ACTION ITEMS

- Acquire pathway easements along the Mine Brook from Meeker Road to Whitenack Road from either NJ Transit or the twenty landowners.
- Create the Mine Brook Trail after the pathway easements have been acquired.



MINE BROOK TRAIL AND THE WHITENACK TRACT

The 12-acre Whitenack Tract could be the western terminus of the Mine Brook Trail in Bernardsville as it enters Far Hills Borough. This property has frontage on Mine Brook, and like Charlotte Hill, could accommodate a loop trail, small parking area, and trailhead off Whitenack Road.

As the proposed Mine Brook Trail enters Far Hills, Bernardsville Borough should work with Far Hills to explore the possibility of expanding the Mine Brook Trail into Far Hills. It might be possible, if enough trail easements were acquired in Far Hills, to create a trail along the Mine Brook and then back up the North Branch to Somerset County's Natirar County Park.

MINE BROOK TRAIL AND THE WHITENACK TRACT ACTION ITEMS

- Create a small parking area and trailhead on Whitenack Road to provide access to Whitenack Tract
- Work with Far Hills Borough to connect Mine Brook Trail with Somerset County's Natirar County Park



MORAINE CREST PARK

Another little used park in Bernardsville is the 15-acre Moraine Crest Park. Although the topography is challenging within this park, a small loop trail accessible from Mt. Airy Road could be created. Since this is located in the most densely developed portion of town, a passive recreational park could attract a lot of public use. In addition to creating a new loop trail, there are also serious erosion issues due to stormwater runoff in this park that should be dealt with. The park can be connected to downtown via existing sidewalks on Mt. Airy Road.

MORAINE CREST PARK ACTION ITEMS

- Create a loop trail to provide good public access to this little-used park.
- Work to address serious erosion issues.

PATRIOTS' PATH GREENWAY

Bernardsville is unique in Somerset County in that there is a viable link to one of the premier County Trail Systems in the State – Morris County Park Commission's Patriots' Path. Spanning over 60 miles, mostly in Morris County, this trail system connects Bernardsville with a surprising array of local, regional, and National Parks. In fact, it is possible to hike Patriots' Path to the Highlands Trail, which connects to the Appalachian Trail. Since Patriots' Path is in Bernardsville, it is theoretically possible to walk from Bernardsville to Maine or Georgia on trails!

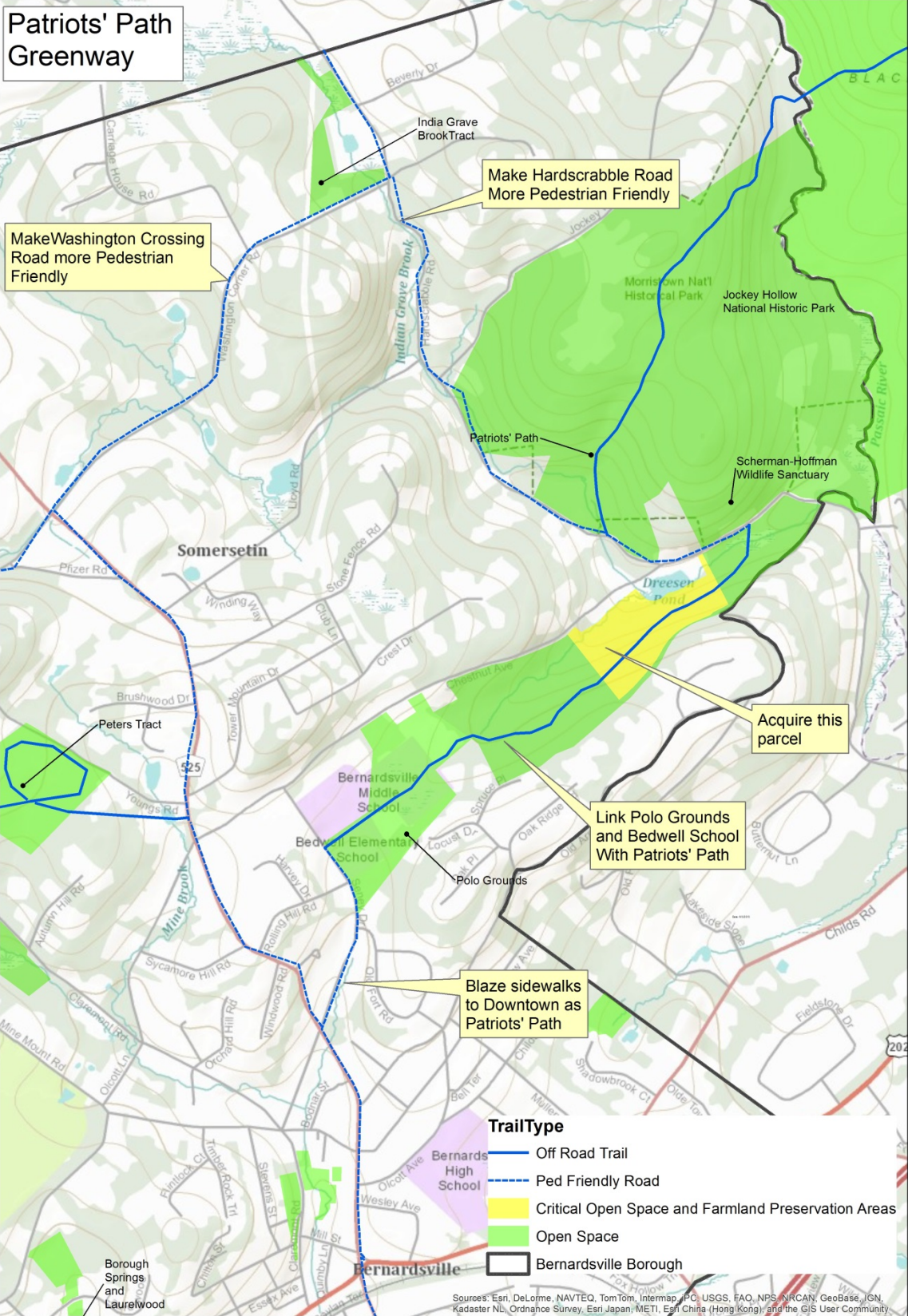
Extending Patriots' Path from the eastern boundary of town to downtown Bernardsville would highlight this unique local asset and enable Bernardsville residents to better access these natural areas.

EXISTING OPEN SPACE AND POTENTIAL TRAILS IN THE PATRIOTS' PATH GREENWAY

Patriots' Path enters Bernardsville through the Cross Estate, a unit of Jockey Hollow National Historic Park. It also links with trails in New Jersey Audubon's Scherman-Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary. Together, these two properties comprise over 350 acres of preserved open space. Both of these properties are great recreational resources not only for Bernardsville, but for visitors from throughout the State. In addition to this land base, NJ Audubon and the National Park Service offer hundreds of outdoor and historical educational programs every year open to the general public.

Patriots' Path could be extended all the way to the Polo Grounds and Bedwell School. Bernardsville's schools could benefit by being linked to these properties. From there, there are sidewalks all the way to downtown Bernardsville, which would help to make the downtown shopping area more of a destination for visitors. Similar to Chester Borough, Bernardsville should extend Patriots' path to downtown by marking this sidewalk route as Patriots' Path. The Morris County Park Commission should be consulted as this plan moves forward to ensure its smooth integration into the larger Patriots' Path system. A new trail should be blazed on the Scherman-Hoffman property already owned by NJ Audubon off Chestnut Avenue. The trail marking could then continue on the sidewalks all the way to Olcott Square. Morris County Parks has developed a system for marking trails using small, stand-alone signs and existing sign posts.

Hardscrabble Road and Washington Crossing Road should also be evaluated to see if they can be made more pedestrian-friendly. These two roads are very scenic and if they were made pedestrian friendly they would link existing open space properties.



In addition to expanding the actual Patriots' Path into downtown Bernardsville, there is a 22.8 acre parcel (Block 35, Lot 13) that should be acquired for open space. If this parcel can't be acquired, a pathway easement should be acquired especially if this parcel is ever developed. The parcel is essentially an in-holding within NJ Audubon's Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary. Preservation would provide a better route for Patriots' Path and protect critical natural resources, including an attractive, mature hardwood forest in close proximity to the Polo Grounds and Bedwell School.



PATRIOTS' PATH GREENWAY ACTION ITEMS

- Acquire Block 35, Lot 13 for open space.
- Connect Patriots' Path from Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary to Downtown Bernardsville. This will entail working with the Morris County Park Commission and marking a new off-road trail as well as existing sidewalks with Patriots' Path signs (blazes).
- Work to make Hardscrabble Road and Washington Crossing Road more pedestrian-friendly.

LITTLE BROOK & NORTH BRANCH GREENWAY

While Jockey Hollow and Scherman-Hoffman are very well-known and visited parks within Bernardsville, Somerset County's Little Brook Sanctuary sees very little public use. It is located in the far Northwestern corner of town just south of the border with Mendham Township. The entrance to the property is difficult to find as there are very few road signs leading people to it. In addition to large estate properties, there are several parcels of active farmland in that part of town. This portion of Bernardsville, along with the Mine Brook, is part of the Raritan River Watershed. The North Branch of the Raritan River creates the boundary with Bernardsville in this area.

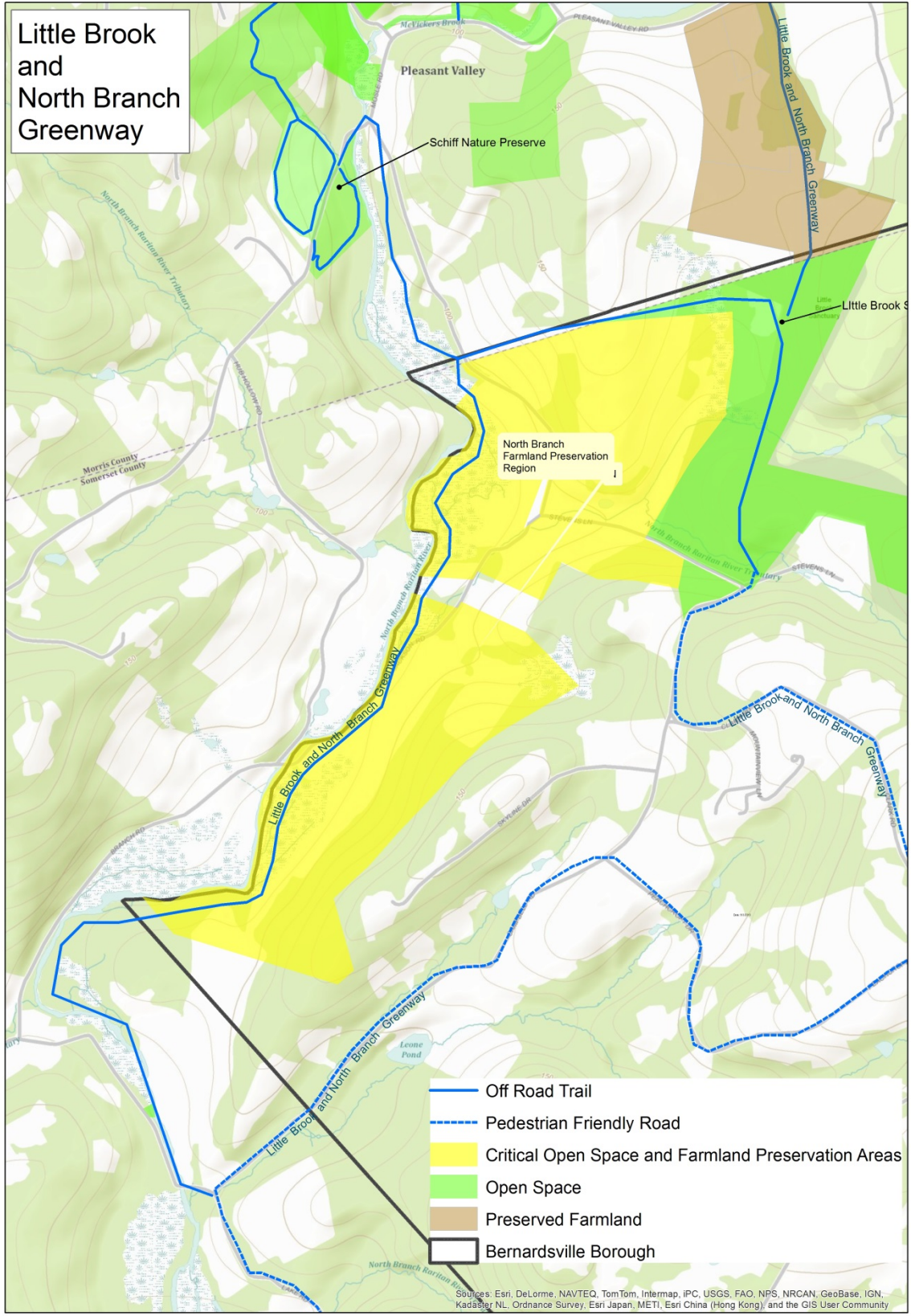
Linking Little Brook Sanctuary by making the streets in the area more pedestrian and bike-friendly could increase local knowledge and usage of the park. Additional land preservation projects in the area should focus on creating a trail along the North Branch that would connect with parks and preserved Open Space in Far Hills and Bedminster, namely Natirar County Park, as well as linking to preserved parks in Mendham Township and the Schiff Nature Preserve.

A viable trail connection to Ravine Lake and the North Branch Corridor would provide residents with access to one of the most scenic portions of New Jersey. Much of this trail expansion work could be accomplished through donation or purchase of public trail easements. In this area, the former bridle trail network can serve as a template as many of these former trails are located on lands that haven't been developed.

This trail could be called the North Branch Trail and run parallel to the North Branch of the Raritan River. It could lead south to Lake Road and eventually connect to Somerset County's Natirar Park. To the North, it could connect with land owned by Schiff Nature Preserve and enable a connection to their 14-mile trail system. This is an area where there are historic bridle trails and much of the North Branch trail could follow these old routes.

Here is the list of Blocks and Lots where a pathway easement would have to be acquired for the North Branch Trail:

Block 1, Lots 2, 4 & 5, Block 2 Lots 1 & 2, and Block 9 Lots 15.01 and 15.02



LITTLE BROOK & NORTH BRANCH FARMLAND PRESERVATION REGION

In addition to the 244-acre farm mentioned earlier in this report, there is one other area of active open field agriculture in Bernardsville near the boundary with Mendham Township, Peapack-Gladstone Borough and Far Hills Borough. This farming area is located adjacent to the North Branch off Stevens Lane and, like the 244-acre farm, this area is primarily used for hay and as a cattle pasture. Farmland preservation of this region would help preserve the scenic, rural character of the area and allow farming to continue in Bernardsville. Preservation of this farmland area through the acquisition of development easements would help buffer Little Brook Sanctuary from further development.

The properties that should be considered for farmland preservation are:

Block 1, Lots 2 & 5, Block 2 Lots 1, 2, 10 & 11 and Block 9, Lots 1, 3, 15.01 and 15.02

LITTLE BROOK AND NORTH BRANCH GREENWAY ACTION ITEMS

- Work with the Somerset County Agricultural Development Board on preserving active farms within this area.
- Work with landowners to acquire pathway easements to create the North Branch Trail. Connect this trail to Lake Road and work with Far Hills Borough on creating a pathway connection from Lake Road to Natirar.
- Work with Somerset County to create better directional road signs to lead people to the parking area of Little Brook Sanctuary.
- Study the feasibility of making Campbell Road, Clark Road, Peachcroft Road more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly.

ACTION PLAN ITEMS

	Project Type	Estimated Completion Dates	Notes	See page:
Mine Brook Greenway - Peters Tract and William Post Natural Area				
Acquire Block 17, Lot 29 as an addition to the Peters Tract.	Land Acquisition	2015	Wait until legal issues are worked out.	11
Create a small, rustic parking area and trailhead kiosk on Block 17, Lot 29	Park Development	2016	Wait until after Block 17, Lot 29 is acquired.	11
Create a loop trail in the Peters Tract	Park Development	2014	Trail can be designed and created now.	11
Work with Raritan Headwaters Association to create a trail on the William Post Natural Area	Park Development	2014	Trail can be designed and created now.	11
Work to improve a pedestrian-friendly connection from these properties to downtown Bernardsville on Claremont Road. This will require more detailed pedestrian and bicycle planning and should be done on a town-wide basis.	Pedestrian Friendly Road Improvements	2015	Develop and begin implementing comprehensive strategy for bike and pedestrian improvements throughout town.	11
Creating a New Park in Downtown Bernardsville - Daylighting the Mine Brook				
Conduct more detailed planning in order to determine the viability of creating a new park in downtown Bernardsville by daylighting the Mine Brook.	Park Development	2015	Work with landscape designer and engineer to determine feasibility of park creation project.	12
Open Space Around Borough Hall				
Locate and Create a trail on Laurelwood and Borough Springs Property that connects to Round Top Road and forms part of the Round Top Road Loop Trail.	Park Development	2014	Trail can be designed and created now.	14
Delineate and mark Mine Brook Trail from Nervine Park to Old Quarry Road.	Park Development	2014	Trail can be designed and created now.	14
Create safe crossing of Route 202.	Park Development	2014	Crossing can be designed and created now.	14
Round Top Loop Trail and Preservation of Block 30, Lot 22.03				
Acquire Block 20, Lot 22.03 to create a park.	Land Acquisition	2014	Work with Trust for Public Land to acquire this property.	15
Acquire a pathway easement on Block 30, Lot 11.	Land Acquisition	2015	Work with open space consultant to acquire easement on this property.	15
Create the Round Top Loop Trail.	Park Development	2016	Wait until easements and land are acquired in order to complete the loop trail.	15

Mine Brook Trail and Preservation of Large Farm				
Work with Somerset County to acquire and preserve the large farm property.	Land Acquisition	2015	Continue to work with open space consultant, Open Space Institute, and Somerset County to preserve this property.	16
Extend the Mine Brook Greenway Trail onto this large Farm Property after it has been acquired.	Park Development	2016	Work with County on park master plan after large farm is acquired. Ensure Mine Brook Greenway trail gets included in the plan.	16
Make Meeker Road and Pill Hill Road more pedestrian-friendly to enable a connection from Kiwanis Park to the Mine Brook Trail.	Pedestrian Friendly Road Improvements	2015	Develop and begin implementing comprehensive strategy for bike and pedestrian improvements throughout town.	16
Mine Brook Trail and Charlotte Hill Tract				
Create small parking area and trailhead kiosk at existing pull-off near railroad tracks.	Park Development		Parking area can be designed and created now.	17
Create a loop trail on the Charlotte Hill Tract.	Park Development		Trail can and parking area be designed and created now.	17
Mine Brook Trail and Acquisition of Pathway Easements				
Acquire pathway easements along the Mine Brook from Meeker Road to Whitenack Road from either NJ Transit or the twenty landowners.	Land Acquisition	2016	Continue to work with open space consultant to preserve this property.	18
Create the Mine Brook Trail after the pathway easements have been acquired.	Park Development	2017	Trail can be created after pathway easements are acquired from various landowners or NJ Transit right-of-way/railroad.	18
Mine Brook Trail and the Whitenack Tract				
Create a small parking area, trailhead and loop trail on Whitenack Road to provide access to Whitenack Tract	Park Development	2014	Trail and other improvements can be designed and created now.	19
Work with Far Hills Borough to connect Mine Brook Trail with Somerset County's Natirar County Park	Land Acquisition	2017	Continue to work with open space consultant to coordinate trail development activities.	19
Moraine Crest Park				
Create a trailhead and loop trail to provide good public access to this little-used park.	Park Development	2016	Trailhead kiosk and trail can be created after erosion problem is solved.	20

Work to address serious erosion issues.	Park Development	2014	Erosion issues should be addressed before trails creation.	20
Patriots' Path Greenway				
Acquire Block 35, Lot 13 for open space.	Land Acquisition	2014	Work with open space consultant and NJ Audubon to acquire this parcel.	21
Connect Patriots' Path from Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary to Downtown Bernardsville. This will entail working with the Morris County Park Commission and marking a new off-road trail as well as existing sidewalks with Patriots' Path signs (blazes).	Park Development	2013	Begin working with open space consultant, Morris County Parks, NJ Audubon, and Bernardsville public works to delineate, create, and blaze Patriots' Path.	21
Work to make Hardscrabble Road and Washington Crossing Road more pedestrian friendly.	Pedestrian Friendly Road Improvements	2016	Develop and begin implementing comprehensive strategy for bike and pedestrian improvements throughout town.	21
Little Brook and North Branch Greenway				
Work with Somerset County on preserving active farms within this area.	Land Acquisition	2014	Work with open space consultant and Somerset County to preserve farmland within the Little Brook and North Branch Greenway.	24
Work with landowners to acquire pathway easements to create the North Branch Trail. Connect this trail to Lake Road and work with Far Hills Borough on creating a pathway connection from Lake Road to Natirar.	Land Acquisition	2015	Work with open space consultant to better delineate and acquire easements for a North Branch Trail.	24
Work with Somerset County to create better directional road signs to lead people to the parking area of Little Brook Sanctuary.	Park Development	2013	Work with open space consultant and Somerset County.	24
Study the feasibility of making Campbell Road, Clark Road, Peachcroft Road more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. This will require more detailed pedestrian and bicycle planning and should be done on a town-wide basis.	Pedestrian Friendly Road Improvements	2016	Develop and begin implementing comprehensive strategy for bike and pedestrian improvements throughout town.	24

