

WARREN COUNTY OPEN SPACE PLAN

1999

Prepared for

Warren County Planning Board

Prepared by

Warren County Planning Department

I hereby certify that the Warren County Open Space Plan 1999 was adopted by resolution of the Warren County Planning Board at a meeting held on May 24, 1999.

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Forward

Warren County's introduction to open space planning began in 1974 with the first open space element to the Warren County Master Plan. Back then, however, the perception of many county residents was that an abundance of open space existed. Unfortunately, this was common throughout the state, and now, land that once was perceived by many people to be "open space" has been developed.

Now imagine, hiking from Storm King Mountain on the Hudson River to Phillipsburg on the banks of the Delaware River, canoeing down rivers and streams that our ancestors used, exploring unique geological lakes formed during the Ice Age, or having trails next to your house where one could walk for leisure or exercise or explore and share the rich history of our county, such as, the Morris Canal, White Lake and West Oxford Mountain Natural Resource Areas. One may also want to visit one of the two of the last remaining steam engines of its size in the northern hemisphere, or show your children or grandchildren the farm you grew up on, or the woods, fields and streams that you played in as a youngster instead of just telling them what was there before the houses and shopping malls. This is all possible if we, the citizens of Warren County, work together to preserve open space.

As you read this updated open space plan, you will see that the Warren County Planning Board presents ways to provide for conservation easements, provides insight into creative subdivision layouts with innovative preservation techniques through the use of "transfer of development rights" or the clustering on non-contiguous parcels, and provides a format for interagency coordination in preserving open space.

Last, but not least, the Warren County Planning Board invites the citizens of Warren

County to become involved with all aspects of open space issues that lie before us, from the smallest neighborhood play lot to the largest open space parcel. Together, we can make a difference.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rapid and largely unanticipated development experienced throughout New Jersey, particularly in the metropolitan areas, has focused the attention of most people on the pressing need to conserve open space for future generations, and, for that matter, for the present generation. As new growth in many areas of the state devours acres, and even square miles, for residential, commercial and industrial uses, at an ever-increasing rate, less and less land remains available to meet the growing demands of society for outdoor recreation and public open space areas. The consequence of this is that many political jurisdictions lose their opportunity to save open space and will, perhaps, never be able to provide a reasonable minimum amount of open space, or, if they can, only at exorbitant prices produced by soaring land values. The perception of an abundance of open space exists to many Warren County citizens, but one only has to look to the east to see how fast the reality of open space can be lost.

As the demand for land increases, Warren County runs the risk of losing unusual opportunities for the preservation of open space that will be of immeasurable benefit to future generations. This situation is inevitable as vacant land in counties closer to the metropolitan core becomes more scarce, forcing developers and home seekers to outlying areas offering abundant land at less expensive prices. Faced with this prospect, only timely action on the part of the State of New Jersey, the County, and its various municipalities can assure proper direction of new growth and a proper balance of open space and recreational land.

The open space element of the Warren County Master Plan is intended to provide a framework for open space preservation through county and municipal planning. Open space can be

defined as land acquired and dedicated to remain undeveloped. These land areas may include streams, corridors, lakes, ridge tops, steep slopes, woodlands, grasslands, and agricultural lands. These features make up the character of the area and should be considered whenever sites are evaluated for acquisition. Areas designated for open space can protect many county natural resources, such as the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater, cultural and historic areas, and view sheds associated with ridge tops. Open space acquired now can serve to satisfy the recreational needs of county residents as development occurs in the future. This plan identifies areas and gives suggestions on ways to preserve open space in Warren County.

Open space planning is only a part of the overall planning effort of Warren County. The Warren County Open Space Plan must be coordinated with other facets of the County's planning program, including general development, transportation, utilities, and capital planning. As plans for these elements become more firmly established, and as population growth occurs, periodic review of open space objectives will be required. This will provide the necessary guarantee of continued preservation of the County's natural beauty and heritage for generations to come.