



MOUNT OLIVE OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

OPEN SPACE IN MT. OLIVE TOWNSHIP

Since the voters of Mt. Olive approved a special tax to preserve open space in November 1996, the Township has preserved over 2,000 acres of land. In addition, the Trust has funded a diverse array of recreation facilities. The collected tax is placed in an Open Space Trust where funding is dedicated only for open space and farmland preservation and recreation facility development. The Open Space Trust helps Mt. Olive remain a community with a healthy mix of natural lands, diverse places to play, and commercial and residential development.

In 2007, the Trust collected about \$600,000. Most of these funds are paying debt accumulated for previous recreation and land projects. The most recent expenditures of the Trust resulted in a dog park for Mt. Olive pets and their owners in Turkey Brook Park and a property on Budd Lake that will provide a place for residents to enjoy the lake.

Throughout the history of the Trust, the Township purchased 17 properties. Some of these properties were donations. Nine of the 17 acquisitions are located in the community of Budd Lake, seven in Flanders. One property, Turkey Brook Greenway is in the geographic center of Mt. Olive, situated in both Budd Lake and Flanders. The largest property acquired was 600 acres, the hillside overlooking Budd Lake. The smallest was 12 acres. Landowners of six properties generously donated property to the Township. Some of Mt. Olive's most treasured natural and historical landmarks will remain a part of the community in perpetuity because of the Open Space Trust.

The Trust has been a good deal, economically, for Mt. Olive residents. For every dollar used by the Trust taxpayers to preserve land in Mt. Olive, other partners have contributed \$8. If this land had not been preserved, over 800 new homes could have been built, further taxing stretched educational and municipal service budgets. Partners in land preservation have included the State Green Acres Program, Morris County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust, Federal Forest Legacy Program, and nonprofit conservation organizations, particularly The Land Conservancy of New Jersey Conservancy and Trust for Public Land.

Historically, more (57%) expenditures from the Trust have purchased land. About 40% of the Trust funds have been used to develop recreation facilities, primarily in Turkey Brook Park. In the past 3 years, a small amount (3%) has been spent for historic preservation.

Some of the accomplishments of the Open Space Trust include:

- **Turkey Brook Park.** The Trust is paying the debt incurred for the land purchase and the recreation development—past and present—of the Park.

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- **Access to Allamuchy State Park.** About 3,800 acres of state park is located in Mt. Olive, yet Mt. Olive residents had to travel into Hackettstown to access the park. The 600-acre purchase of additional forested land makes the extensive hiking and mountain bike trails accessible from Mt. Olive.
- **Protection and public access to Budd Lake.** Budd Lake is New Jersey's largest natural lake and contains a bog that is one of New Jersey's most unique natural features. It is the headwaters of the South Branch Raritan River, a drinking water resource for over a million residents downstream. Acquisition of lands around the north end of the lake maintains a natural buffer around the bog, protecting the natural resources. Trails are planned, and recent additions will permit boating, sunset watching, bird watching, fishing for Mt. Olive residents.
- **Farmland preservation.** The Charters Farm on Stephens State Park Road and the Devlin Farm, Church of Illumination Farm and Silver Springs Farm off Tinc Road keep farmland a part of Mt. Olive's scenic landscape.
- **Historic preservation.** The Trust paid for a roof on the Seward Mansion, Mt. Olive's premier historic site located in Turkey Brook Park, and renovations to the 18th century Baptist Church and cemetery on Flanders-Drakestown Road.
- **Recreation facilities.** The Trust paid for the dog park, basketball courts, tennis courts and outdoor volleyball courts as well as the lighting for the baseball fields at Flanders Park.

The Open Space Committee advises the governing body about the use of the Open Space Trust relating to land acquisitions. The Committee recommends properties that:

- Accommodate a mixed use of outdoor recreation activities, from sports fields to walking trails
- Connect with existing preserved lands.
- Attract funding partners, making the acquisition costs more economical for Mt. Olive

The Committee meets the second Monday of every month (except August) at 7:30 p.m. in the municipal building. The public is welcome to attend.

The goal of the Committee for 2008 is to invite the public to explore Mt. Olive's preserved lands. This includes putting up signs that read "MT. OLIVE OPEN SPACE" and building a trail on appropriate properties. If you would be interested in helping build trails in the community, please call Kathy Murphy 973-691-0900x7272 or join us at an Open Space Committee meeting.

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