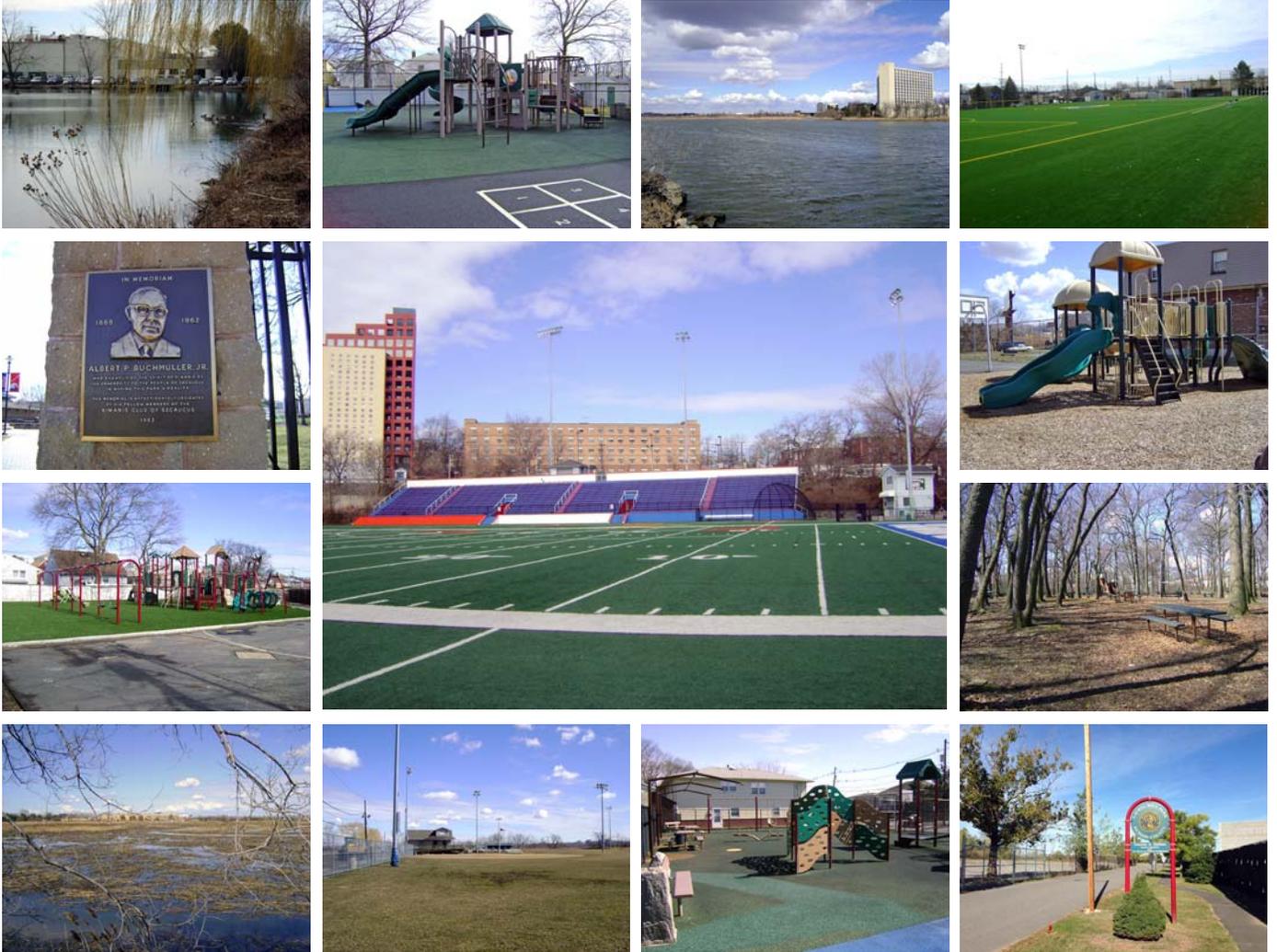


# OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN



SECAUCUS, NEW JERSEY

FEBRUARY 18, 2014

Front Cover, left to right, top to bottom: Duck Pond, Ivanoski Park, Snipes Park, Shetik Field, Buchmuller Park, Kane Stadium (center photo), Eckel Park, Smit Park, Schmidt's Woods, Mill Creek Marsh, Mill Ridge Ball Fields, Naters Park and Laurel Hill Park. Photos courtesy of Philip Wolf, Remington and Vernick Engineers

This Open Space and Recreation Plan Element was made possible by a grant from the 2012 Sustainable Land Use Planning program of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions who are dedicated "To achieve responsible and sustainable use of New Jersey's natural resources through leadership, education, and support of environmental commissions and other local boards, public officials, environmental organizations and concerned citizens."

# Open Space and Recreation Plan

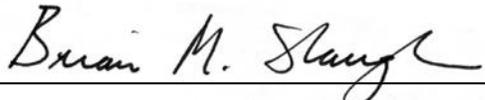
Town of Secaucus  
Hudson County, New Jersey

Adopted by the Planning Board of the Town of Secaucus

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28b(7) and –(8)  
*An Element of the Master Plan*

February 18, 2014

*Prepared by:*



Brian M. Slauch, PP, AICP  
New Jersey Professional Planner License No. 3743

CLARKE CATON HINTZ, PC  
100 Barrack Street  
Trenton, New Jersey 08608  
(609) 883-8383

A signed and sealed original is on file with the Office of the Town Clerk





## **Town of Secaucus Council**

Hon. Michael Gonnelli, Mayor  
Hon. John Bueckner, Deputy Mayor  
Hon. James Clancy, Councilman  
Hon. Robert Costantino, Councilman  
Hon. Gary Jeffas, Councilman  
Hon. William McKeever, Councilman  
Hon. Susan Pirro, Councilwoman

Michael Marra, RMC, Town Clerk  
David Drumeler, Esq., Town Administrator  
Anthony D'Elia, Esq., Town Attorney

## **Town of Secaucus Planning Board**

Hon. Michael Gonnelli, Class I  
William Sallick, Class II  
Hon. Susan Pirro, Class III  
Joseph Pagano, Chairman, Class IV  
Leonard Adis, Class IV  
Doug DePice, Class IV  
Thomas Flanagan, Class IV  
John Hugerich, Class IV  
Jennifer Modi, Class IV

### Alternates

Deborah Santoro  
Barbara Warth

Marie Eck, Board Secretary  
Craig Bassong, Esq., Board Attorney



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOPIC	PAGE
Executive Summary .....	1
Introduction .....	2
Goals and Objectives for Open Space .....	3
Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Open Space Survey .....	4
Municipal .....	4
Table 1. Municipally Owned Open Space and Recreation Facilities.....	5
Description of Municipal Facilities .....	5
School Board, NJ Meadowlands Commission and Hudson County .....	9
Table 2. Open Space and Recreation Lands of Other Governmental Entities .....	10
Description of Other Governmental Open Space/Recreation Facilities .....	10
Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory.....	12
Table 3. Secaucus Recreation and Open Space Inventory. ....	13
Guidelines for the Adequacy of Open Space .....	14
New Jersey Green Acres Program.....	15
National Park and Recreation Association Guidelines .....	15
Secaucus Environmental Commission Park Public Participation Survey .....	16
Active Recreation Needs .....	17
Potential Open Space Acquisitions .....	19
Table 4. Sites Identified for Potential Open Space Acquisition. ....	19
Hackensack Riverwalk .....	22
Conservation Techniques.....	22
Purchase or Donation of Development Rights .....	23
Conservation Easements.....	23
Site Design.....	23
Funding For Open Space Acquisition .....	24
Action Plan for Open Space and Recreation.....	24
Appendix A – Environmental Commission Public Survey Form .....	25
Open Space and Recreation Plan .....	28



# Open Space and Recreation Plan Element

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Open Space and Recreation Plan Element is a part of the municipal Master Plan for development and redevelopment. Open space, including parks and recreational areas, conservation land and greenways, is an important component of the quality of life in Secaucus. The municipality has twenty parks and conservation areas, as well as two community facilities devoted to recreation and leisure, the Secaucus Recreation Center and the Secaucus Youth and Teen Center. In addition to these municipally owned facilities, the Secaucus Board of Education also provides fields, play areas and gymnasiums at its three schools. The Town is also the beneficiary of significant Hudson County and Meadowlands Commission open space lands such as Laurel Hill Park and Mill Creek Marsh.

The Town Recreation Department offers a very comprehensive program of indoor and outdoor recreational programs for Secaucus residents that range in age from infant to adulthood. Sports leagues, such as Babe Ruth baseball and Pop Warner football, make use of Secaucus fields in coordination with the Department. The Town hosts a summer concert series in Buchmuller Park as part of its cultural offerings to residents.

Demand for additional sports fields is continually growing. Secaucus has seen steady growth in its population – more than 30% in the last three decades. Furthermore, the demographic characteristics of the Town have changed in the past few years leading to a stronger demand for adult soccer and cricket facilities. Heavy use of sports fields has created problems with maintenance and the condition of the fields. The municipality has responded by spending funds for the construction of artificial turf at two facilities, Kane Stadium and Shetik Field, which allows for continuous use and a greater number of multi-purpose fields. Additional conversion of turf to artificial turf fields is being considered.

The Planning Board recommends that additional parcels for open space be set aside. Two of these would be under municipal ownership. One would be used for the expansion of Acorn Park and the other at the former Panasonic headquarters site for additional sports fields. The additional open space parcels are intended primarily for conservation purposes, and in some limited locations, passive recreation. These are proposed for acquisition by the state and county as part of their regionally-focused open space systems. The additional acreage if all of these are acquired is about 116 acres. Combined with existing municipal, school district, county and state holdings, open space would constitute approximately 817 acres of Secaucus' 4,224 acres.



## INTRODUCTION

The Open Space and Recreation Plan Element combines the open space preservation of a Conservation Plan Element, and leisure and recreation found in a Recreation Plan Element. Open space includes land used for active recreation, passive recreation, and conservation purposes<sup>1</sup>. This represents a continuum of use from the most to least intensively used land for open space purposes, respectively. In addition, Secaucus has two indoor recreational facilities not associated with open space, the Secaucus Youth and Teen Center and the Secaucus Recreation Center. While more accurately described as community facilities, they also play key roles in providing recreation and leisure activities to the Town. The Open Space and Recreation Plan Element is mainly concerned with municipal lands and facilities, but a complete picture cannot be drawn without an understanding of the lands held by the Board of Education, Hudson County and the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission that contribute to recreation and open space.

Master plans, of which this element is a part, often analyze and recommend how land should be developed or redeveloped in response to economic, social and cultural factors. The Open Space and Recreation Plan Element, on the other hand, is focused on land intended to be left primarily open, or undeveloped. Open space produces many benefits to the municipality. It provides opportunities for recreation, land for the preservation of wildlife habitats and other natural environments, a gathering place for community events and visual relief from urbanization. Setting aside land for these purposes also supports property values.

Active recreation consists of organized sports or leisure activities that usually require specialized fields and equipment to play games. Baseball, football, soccer and tennis are examples of active recreation. Secaucus also has several youth sports organizations devoted to active recreation that are supported by facilities developed by the municipality. Passive recreation includes less formal activities, such as bird watching, kite flying and hiking. Lands for conservation purposes are intended to be left in their natural state for wildlife refuges, as buffers between developments or to protect environmentally sensitive land and water resources. Conservation areas are typically identified with stream and river corridors, wetlands and other natural phenomena but may be upland left undisturbed. Since Secaucus is nearly an island, stream and river corridors play a large role in identifying land for conservation.

---

<sup>1</sup> - Preserved farmland is sometimes included, too, but in Secaucus, there is no longer any land assessed for agricultural purposes.

These lands for open space are frequently owned by other levels of government and are the most environmentally sensitive in the Town.

This element will begin with the goals and objectives for open space in Secaucus. This will be followed by a description of Secaucus' existing recreation uses and open space lands. The Town's recreation programs and other sports associations will be described in brief. The amount of land devoted to recreation will be compared to state and national standards. Techniques for preserving open space and funding sources are discussed. Lastly, recommendations and actions are proposed to complete the element.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR OPEN SPACE**

The Planning Board adopted a set of goals and objectives in the Master Plan in 2009. A number of these goals relate to open space and recreational objectives. These include the goal of protecting the natural resources of Secaucus in order to preserve its natural heritage for future generations. Specific means of addressing this goal were included in the objectives listed below:

- In conjunction with the NJ Meadowlands Commission, work towards the restoration of important wetlands areas at the edges of the municipality.
- In partnership with Hudson County, continue with the creation of the Hackensack Riverwalk.
- Look for opportunities to improve the stream corridors of the Penhorn and Chromakill Creeks.
- Promote the conservation of water.
- Encourage of the use of landscape chemicals with the lowest impact on water quality.

In addition, the Goals and Objectives Statement included the following objective under the goal: Building on Secaucus' existing assets to maintain a community with strong connections and well balanced amenities:

- Look for opportunities to acquire additional open space based as the Town's population increases through redevelopment especially for leisure and recreational purposes.

In addition to these still relevant objectives for open space and recreation, several additional objectives are proposed:

- In partnership with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, develop a Memorandum of Understanding that establishes standard conservation easement language to be inserted as part of the conditions approving applications for development. A conservation easement provides an additional level of protection of environmentally sensitive lands.
- In partnership with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, develop a Memorandum of Understanding and rules that establish incentives for the creation of public open space amenities. These amenities could include such items as a pocket park, extensions of the Hackensack Riverwalk, and open space connections to public roadways.

Secaucus had a population of 14,061 in 1990, 15,931 in 2000, 16,264 persons in 2010 and is presently estimated at 18,351<sup>2</sup>, an increase of 30.5% in 22 years. The Town now ranks 7<sup>th</sup> out of 12 municipalities in Hudson County in population. One consequence of the increase in population is the continuing demand for sports fields for not only youth organizations and programs, but for adult leagues as well.

Opportunities for acquisition of additional land for open space purposes are limited. According to the 2009 Land Use Plan, only 10.6% of the land in Secaucus was vacant, meaning that it had no discernible purpose and was classified vacant in the property records database. Parcels that are a suitable size for bigger facilities are almost entirely constrained by environmentally sensitive features such as wetlands and flood plain or are former landfills and are not feasible for active recreation.

## **PARKS, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, AND OPEN SPACE SURVEY**

### *MUNICIPAL*

The Town currently owns more than 200 acres of open space that is intended for recreation and conservation purposes. Secaucus Town has a diverse variety of park and recreation facilities ranging from small neighborhood playgrounds to large athletic facilities and tranquil natural areas. Most of the parks in Secaucus's inventory are used for active recreation. Their location is shown on the Open Space and Recreation Plan, found at the end of this document. Table I provides a summary of the name of the open space, its block and lot numbers, whether it is presently on the Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory, and the general type of open space. Larger parcels typically encompass more than one type of open space. The key

---

<sup>2</sup> - As of July 1, 2012. (<http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/dmograph/est/mcd/hudest.htm>)

in the table corresponds to the location key in the Plan. Following the table is a description of the leisure, recreational and other amenities contained in the park.

Table 1. Municipally Owned Open Space and Recreation Facilities.

Key	Name of Facility	Blocks	Lots	Acres	Open Space Type
1	Trolley Park	N/A <sup>(1)</sup>		0.14	Passive Recreation
2	Oak Lane Park	194	14-18	1.85	Passive Recreation
3	Acorn Park	195	5,5.01	1.16	Active and Passive Recreation
4	Riverwalk Access	203	19.02	2.05	Passive Recreation
5	High School Marsh	226	38	43.87	Conservation
6	Mill Creek Point Park	225 226	13, 13.01, 14 39	7.45	Active and Passive Recreation
7	Mill Ridge Ball Fields <sup>(3)</sup>	225	12	32.70	Active Recreation, Conservation
8	Schmidt's Woods <sup>(3)</sup>	220 222	1 1	17.46	Active and Passive Recreation
9	Secaucus Recreation Center	226	4.02	3.20	Active and Passive Recreation
10	Naters Park	215	12	0.23	Active Recreation
11	Mill Creek Park	224	21	0.50	Passive Recreation
12	Smit Park <sup>(3)</sup>	183	20	0.13	Active Recreation
13	Snipes Park <sup>(2) (3)</sup>	21	3.01, 3.02, 5.01	63.62	Conservation
14	Eckel Park <sup>(3)</sup>	111	1	0.08	Active Recreation
15	Secaucus Youth & Teen Center	134	10	0.17	Active Recreation
16	Buchmuller Park <sup>(3)</sup>	143	1, 7	5.42	Active Recreation
17	Fountain Park	93	1	1.38	Passive Recreation
18	Kane Stadium <sup>(3)</sup>	98	11.01	4.47	Active Recreation
19	Duck Pond <sup>(3)</sup>	27	2.02	2.59	Active and Passive Recreation
20	Shetik Field <sup>(3)</sup>	30	8	3.40	Active Recreation
21	Ivanoski Park <sup>(3)</sup>	38	15	0.23	Active Recreation
22	Fish Creek Marsh	3 7	6 2	13.09	Conservation
<b>TOTAL MUNICIPAL ACRES</b>				<b>205.19</b>	

- Notes: (1) Occupies the terminus of the Paterson Plank Road right-of-way at the Hackensack River.  
 (2) Land held jointly with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission.  
 (3) On Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory.

Sources: Secaucus Town Department of Recreation, NJ Green Acres Program, NJ Association of County Tax Boards

**DESCRIPTION OF MUNICIPAL FACILITIES**

TROLLEY PARK (1) – Trolley Park sits at the northern terminus of Paterson Plank Road at the bank of the Hackensack River. The bridge over the river to permit the continuation of the road northward was dismantled after the construction of the Route 3 Bridge in about 1930. The park has a looped walkway to the river’s edge

and playground. It is adjacent to open space associated with the Riverview Court development and is anticipated to be a way station on the Hackensack Riverwalk.

**OAK LANE PARK (2)** – Acquired on December 19, 2013, Oak Lane Park is the newest acquisition by the Town. This purchase will allow the continuation of the Hackensack Riverwalk and will complement nearby Acorn Park. Access is gained from Oak Lane.

**ACORN PARK (3)** – The park contains a portion of the Hackensack Riverwalk and is improved with a playground for the Farm Road neighborhood. Access is from Acorn Lane.

**RIVERWALK ACCESS (4)** – This parcel provides access for users and maintenance workers of the Riverwalk from the end of Farm Road and is located in between Acorn Park and the Secaucus High School.

**HIGH SCHOOL MARSH (5)** – The actual wetland is divided in ownership between the Town and the Secaucus Board of Education. This is the larger parcel of land located in between the High and Middle School building and Mill Creek Point Park. It is across Mill Ridge Road from the Mill Ridge ball fields (map key 7). It is intended for conservation purposes; however, the Riverwalk path system is located along its northern edge with the Hackensack River.

**MILL CREEK POINT PARK (6)** – Located at the end of Mill Ridge Road, Mill Creek Point Park provides a sweeping vista of the Hackensack River. It provides the northerly terminus of the Hackensack Riverwalk and contains a discovery trail, dog park, playground with swings, canoeing, kayaking, and passive recreational pursuits such as bird watching.

**MILL RIDGE BALL FIELDS (7)** – One of the Town's largest active recreation sites, it includes fields for softball, soccer and cricket, as well as offering a golf driving range and public restrooms. Located on Mill Ridge Road, it provides access to the river and Mill Creek. The active recreation portion of the site is approximately 9.72 acres, with the remaining area of almost 23 acres devoted to conservation. This site shares the creek with the Mill Creek Marsh (map key 28).

**SCHMIDT'S WOODS (8)** – Schmidt's Woods is the site of the Town's outdoor pool complex and is one of the oldest parks in the system. The pool complex is sited in the cleared area of the park, which is otherwise wooded. The pool complex includes an Olympic-sized pool which also used for swim meets with the resident youth team, the Seahawks, a diving pool, an exercise/training pool and a kiddie pool. Within the woods there are picnic facilities, a pavilion, fitness and play trails, playground, and public restrooms. The park is across Koelle Boulevard from the Secaucus Recreation Center (map key 9).

SECAUCUS RECREATION CENTER (9) – Though a community facility rather than a park, the 6-year old recreation center is the focus of recreational programming for many activities in Secaucus and is located at 1200 Koelle Boulevard. The facility has an indoor pool, fitness center, indoor track, gymnasium and multi-purpose rooms. Outside is a mediation garden. The Town’s Recreation Department also has its offices in the center.

NATERS PARK (10) – Also located on Koelle Boulevard at its intersection with Blondel Drive, the park contains a playground, kiddie shower, picnic area and basketball court.

MILL CREEK PARK (11) – The park is across the Mill Creek from the large Mill Creek Marsh (key map 28) at the end of Huber Street and Park Drive. It affords views across the Marsh for wildlife viewing.

SMIT PARK (12) – A pocket park on Valley Court, the facility has a junior basketball court, kiddie shower and swings.

SNIPES PARK (13) – Snipes Park is a facility held jointly by the Town and the New Jersey Meadowlands. Much of the park is occupied by the Hackensack River and adjoins the Meadowlands Hospital and Clarion Hotel at the end of Harmon Plaza Drive. Access to the land portion of the park is from the central parking lot of Harmon Plaza. The park is for conservation purposes.

ECKEL PARK (14) – The park provides a playground with climber and swings for the neighborhood at Clarendon Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. Additionally, the site contains a basketball court, picnic area and kiddie shower.

SECAUCUS YOUTH & TEEN CENTER (15) – Prior to the construction of the Secaucus Recreation Center, this building served as the sole indoor recreation facility for the municipality (setting aside the use of school property). Like the Secaucus Recreation Center, this may be considered a community facility rather than open space due to its developed nature. The facility is located at 145 Front Street. The center has an undersized basketball court suitable for use up to 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

BUCHMULLER PARK (16) – Located in the downtown, Buchmuller Park is the site of many of the Town’s cultural activities. It has formerly been the site of the Town Library until a new facility was constructed on Paterson Plank Road that opened in 2003. The park contains the Town’s amphitheatre where its summer concert series is held. During the winter, the main plaza is flooded for ice skating in seasonal weather. In addition the park contains bocce, tennis, and basketball courts; picnic area, pavilion, and a golf putting green.

FOUNTAIN PARK (17) – Fountain Park was developed from the demolition and cleanup of a plating factory. It contains community gardens on raised planting beds to avoid disturbing the cap over the residual contamination on the site. It is located on Raydol Avenue and Humboldt Place.

KANE STADIUM (18) – The stadium is a multi-use facility with an artificial turf field for football, soccer and baseball. Both the Secaucus Junior Patriots and Babe Ruth Baseball youth sports organizations make use of the facility. The stadium is located on Dorigo Lane near the NJ Turnpike.

DUCK POND (19) – Home to the Town’s annual fishing contest; the Duck Pond is located in the middle of the industrial complex that occupies much of the southern half of the municipality. Accessed from the end of Helen Avenue off of County Avenue, the facility also contains a picnic area.

SHETIK FIELD (20) – Shetik Field was recently renovated to create an artificial turf surface primarily for soccer, but also for softball and baseball. The high school soccer team uses the fields for their home games, as well as youth sports organizations. The use of the site for tennis and basketball, as well as public restrooms, has created a multi-faceted sports complex at the park. The fields are located at County Avenue and Jefferson Avenue.

IVANOSKI PARK (21) – Ivanoski Park is a neighborhood playground with climber and swings, kiddie shower, and picnic tables. The facility is located mid-block on Charles Street.

FISH CREEK MARSH (22) – Fish Creek Marsh is at the confluence of Fish Creek and the Hackensack River in the extreme southeast corner of Secaucus. This area of the municipality is characterized by tidal wetlands. The site itself is adjacent to the south section of the former Malanka Landfill. A small portion is on the north side of the Conrail line which is the southernmost line in the Town. The marsh is adjacent to land proposed for additional conservation purposes, owned by a subsidiary of PSE&G, and is just to the east of the Riverbend Marsh owned by the state.

Total land in municipal conservation, active and passive recreation is 205.19 acres. The total area of Secaucus is 4,224 acres (3,725 acres of land, 499 of water). Consequently, the municipality’s land for such uses is approximately 4.86%.

*SCHOOL BOARD, NJ MEADOWLANDS COMMISSION AND HUDSON COUNTY*

Three other governmental levels have recreation and open space sites in Secaucus. The first of these is the Secaucus Board of Education who owns four sites and three schools. Common to many municipalities, the Town's recreation department works closely with the Board of Education to schedule various programs and share facilities. For example, the Town's basketball leagues use the elementary school gyms for their program. On the other hand, the high school swim team uses the indoor pool at the Recreation Center and the soccer team uses Shetik Field. This collaborative effort yields much efficiency in administration and maintenance, as well as offering more opportunities for recreation and leisure pursuits.

In contrast to the active recreation emphasized at the local level, the focus by the state's regional planning and development agency – the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission – is on land preservation and conservation. As previously noted Secaucus is nearly an island surrounded by the Hackensack River and tidal creeks. The edges of the municipality are flood prone and as global warming continues, the risk of flooding becomes greater. Preserving these areas from development is critical in mitigating climatic effects and a focus of the Commission. Secondly, because of its late development compared to the rest of Hudson County, it still has substantial land areas that are tidal marshes. Balancing the orderly development of the Hackensack Meadowlands with the preservation of nature is one of the purposes under which the Commission was created<sup>3</sup>. Lastly, the Meadowlands Commission has overseen wetlands fill mitigation where developers and other state agencies have offset development activities with the purchase, or payment of funds for the purchase, of lands to be preserved. Mitigation funds have also allowed for the restoration of degraded wetlands. Mill Creek Marsh, for example, was the recipient of such funds and underwent restoration in the late 1990's. New channels were dredged and over the past decade silt has accreted on the banks of the channels to create new tidal wetlands.

The third level of government, Hudson County, has a key recreational facility in Secaucus, Laurel Hill Park, as well as land for conservation purposes. As will be described below, their facilities complement many of the ones owned by the Town. Though these facilities are open and used by many Hudson County residents, the mere fact that the Park is located in Secaucus benefits local leagues and recreational programs.

Table 2, Open Space and Recreation Lands of Other Governmental Entities, lists the facilities owned by these three jurisdictions by block and lot number, number of acres and type of facility. Each facility is numbered with a key that corresponds to its

---

<sup>3</sup> - <http://www.njmeadowlands.gov/about/mission.html>, accessed December 22, 2013

placement within the Town and is depicted on the Open Space and Recreation Plan found at the end of this document.

Table 2. Open Space and Recreation Lands of Other Governmental Entities

Key	Name of Facility	Blocks	Lots	Acres	Open Space Type
SECAUCUS BOARD OF EDUCATION					
23	Secaucus Middle and High School <sup>(1)</sup>	226	17.01	13.92	School Athletic Facility
24	High School Marsh	226	17.02	6.97	Conservation
25	Huber St. Elementary School <sup>(1)</sup>	179	1	0.11	School Recreational Facility
26	Clarendon Elementary School <sup>(1)</sup>	70	1	3.28	School Recreational Facility
Sub-total Acres				24.28	
NEW JERSEY MEADOWLANDS COMMISSION					
27	Farm Road Preserve	203	40	1.41	Passive Recreation
28	Mill Creek Marsh	185	2.03	206.91	Conservation
29	Anderson Creek Marsh <sup>(2)</sup>	18	2, 2.01	51.22	Conservation
30	County Rd. Ext. Marsh	5	4, 4.01, 6	40.40	Conservation
31	Riverbend Wetland Preserve	3	3	58.13	Conservation
Sub-total Acres				358.07	
HUDSON COUNTY					
32	Laurel Hill County Park <sup>(2)</sup>	5	1, 2.01	98.95	Active and Passive Recreation
33	Riverbend Wetland Preserve <sup>(2)</sup>	1 1.01	3 1	14.99	Conservation
Sub-total Acres				113.94	
TOTAL OTHER GOVERNMENT ACRES				496.29	
<b>TOTAL MUNICIPAL AND OTHER GOVERNMENT ACRES</b>				<b>701.48</b>	

Notes: (1) Acreage listed is the approximate area used for athletic and recreational facilities.  
 (2) On Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory.

Sources: Secaucus Town Department of Recreation, Hudson County Green Map, NJ Association of County Tax Boards, NJMC Green Map

**DESCRIPTION OF OTHER GOVERNMENTAL OPEN SPACE/RECREATION FACILITIES**

The following are the Secaucus Board of Education lands partially used for sports, recreation and conservation:

SECAUCUS MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL (23) – The school is located in the north end of the Town on Mill Ridge Road and on the south bank of the Hackensack River. The Hackensack Riverwalk traverses the northern property line; the school is a key part of the pathway’s north section. Like many high schools, there are athletic fields and courts for different sports. Here the site has a football stadium that is the home of the Secaucus Patriots, there is a track that surrounds the fields, tennis courts, ball fields, as well as the high school gymnasium.

HIGH SCHOOL MARSH (24) – This is an area of tidal wetlands on a triangular-shaped parcel immediately adjoining the school parcel as well as the Town’s part of the wetlands. The close proximity of the marshes provides valuable student learning opportunities for ecological and biological studies.

HUBER STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (25) – The school is the older of the two elementary schools and has less land area for recreation. The site contains swings and climbers for student recess. Not surprisingly, the school is located on Huber Street but also fronts on Paterson Plank Road.

CLARENDON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (26) – Clarendon Elementary School is located on 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Hudson Avenue. The school grounds have baseball and softball fields, basketball courts, and playgrounds.

Following are the lands of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission:

FARM ROAD PRESERVE (27) – Though not officially named, this property is located to the west of the high school the Town’s Riverwalk Access parcel. Part of the northern section of the Hackensack Riverwalk has been constructed adjacent to the river bank. The site is adjacent to proposed open space, the former Laminations-by-Estelle factory. The land is intended for conservation purposes.

MILL CREEK MARSH (28) – This site is the largest open space parcel in the Town and is the location of a successful wetlands improvement project that was undertaken about 15 years ago. It is located on the west side of the eastern spur of the NJ Turnpike which was built on fill through the wetland and forms the eastern bank of the marshland. Mill Creek forms the boundary on its west side and the Hackensack River the north side. Mill Creek Park, the Secaucus Recreation Center, Mill Ridge Ballfields and Mill Creek Point Park also adjoin this open space. A recreation trail for wildlife viewing accessible from the Mill Creek Mall parking lot and from behind the A.C. Moore store provides vistas across the wetland. The trail is more than a mile in length. It is used for conservation purposes.

ANDERSON CREEK MARSH (29) – Anderson Creek Marsh (also known as the Southern Tract) is located to the south and west of the Bergen County rail line of New Jersey Transit. This rail line was relocated in between the marsh and the rear of buildings facing Meadowlands Parkway with the construction of Secaucus Junction, a major transfer point for NJ Transit trains. The marsh is kept for conservation purposes.

COUNTY ROAD EXTENSION MARSH (30) – Though not officially named, this land consists of the wetlands fringe and flood plain of the Hackensack River to the

south and east of NJ Transit's Main Line branch. To the southeast it abuts the Xchange at Secaucus Junction apartment complex. It is intended for conservation and complements the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on the other side of the river.

RIVERBEND MARSH (31) – This open space parcel is held for conservation purposes and is the most southern point in Secaucus. To the east is the Malanka Landfill (which separates this conservation land from the Town's Fish Creek Marsh) and to the west is Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Line.

Hudson County owns the following open space parcels in Secaucus:

LAUREL HILL COUNTY PARK (32) – Once a potter's field and asylum, the land has been converted into a multi-use facility with sports fields, a boat launch on the Hackensack, canoe and kayak rentals, playgrounds, and public restrooms. The sports available are softball, baseball, soccer and cricket. In 2005 the construction of the access ramps for Exit 15X of the NJ Turnpike led to the loss of about ten acres of land from the park. However, this was the location of the potter's field (which was relocated) so the construction did not affect the use of the park for active recreation.

RIVERBEND WETLAND PRESERVE (33) – This County parcel is located on the west side of the Amtrak rail corridor noted in the Riverbend Marsh description and has similar characteristics as the marsh with frontage on the Hackensack. The west boundary is the NJ Turnpike and the northern boundary.

### **GREEN ACRES RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY**

The Green Acres Program with the NJ Department of Environmental Protection has established rules and procedures for the designation of a recreation and open space inventory (ROSI). Once land has been included and certified as to its use for open space and recreation purposes, the ROSI becomes binding on the municipality and other levels of government. Any desire to remove the site from the ROSI requires an application to the NJ Statehouse Commission and typically requires strong public interest reasons as well as replacement with land and facilities of greater value in return. In Table 3 is the proposed Recreation and Open Space Inventory for Secaucus. Because Secaucus is not able to bind another government to the ROSI's listing, none of the property from Table 2 is included except for those parcels that already appear on the inventory<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> - Green Acres Program Open Space Database for Secaucus, NJ Department of Environmental Protection

Table 3. Secaucus Recreation and Open Space Inventory.

Key	Name of Facility	Blocks	Lots	Acres	Interest	Ownership
<b>MUNICIPAL</b>						
1	Trolley Park	N/A <sup>(1)</sup>		0.14		Municipal
2	Oak Lane Park	194	14-18	1.85	Fee	Municipal
3	Acorn Park	195	5,5.01	1.16	Fee	Municipal
4	Riverwalk Access	203	19.02	2.05	Fee	Municipal
5	High School Marsh	226	38	43.87	Fee	Municipal
6	Mill Creek Point Park	225 226	13, 13.01, 14 39	7.45	Fee	Municipal
7	Mill Ridge Ball Fields <sup>(3)</sup>	225	12	32.70	Fee	Municipal
8	Schmidt's Woods <sup>(3)</sup>	220 222	1 1	17.46	Fee	Municipal
10	Naters Park	215	12	0.23	Fee	Municipal
11	Mill Creek Park	224	21	0.50	Fee	Municipal
12	Smit Park <sup>(3)</sup>	183	20	0.13	Fee	Municipal
13	Snipes Park <sup>(2) (3)</sup>	21	3.01, 3.02, 5.01	63.62	Fee	Municipal/ State
14	Eckel Park <sup>(3)</sup>	111	1	0.08	Fee	Municipal
16	Buchmuller Park <sup>(3)</sup>	143	1, 7	5.42	Fee	Municipal
17	Fountain Park	93	1	1.38	Fee	Municipal
18	Kane Stadium <sup>(3)</sup>	98	11.01	4.47	Fee	Municipal
19	Duck Pond <sup>(3)</sup>	27	2.02	2.59	Fee	Municipal
20	Shetik Field <sup>(3)</sup>	30	8	3.40	Fee	Municipal
21	Ivanoski Park <sup>(3)</sup>	38	15	0.23	Fee	Municipal
22	Fish Creek Marsh	3 7	6 2	13.09	Fee	Municipal
<b>STATE AND COUNTY</b>						
29	Anderson Creek Marsh <sup>(3)</sup>	18	2, 2.01	51.22	Fee	State
32	Laurel Hill County Park <sup>(3)</sup>	5	1, 2.01	98.95	Fee	County
33	Riverbend Wetland Preserve <sup>(3)(4)</sup>	1 1.01	3 1	14.99	Fee	County
<b>TOTAL ROSI ACRES</b>				<b>366.98</b>		

- Notes:
- (1) Occupies the terminus of the Paterson Plank Road right-of-way at the Hackensack River.
  - (2) Land held jointly with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission.
  - (3) Presently on the Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory.
  - (4) Named as part of Laurel Hill Park on the existing ROSI, but distinguished here because of its physical separation from the rest of the park by the Turnpike and the nature of its use.

The only significant private open space and recreation in Secaucus, setting aside the Panasonic fields, is located at the Xchange at Secaucus Junction development that has been undergoing construction for the past 8 or 9 years. The developer has constructed its part of the Hackensack Riverwalk on its property and has other jogging and fitness trails, and an outdoor gazebo in an open lawn area.

## **PARK CLASSIFICATIONS**

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is an organization devoted to promoting and developing recreational opportunities throughout the United States. The Association has a useful typography for categorizing active recreation parks into three types based on their size and service area. The categories of parks are mini-parks, neighborhood parks and community parks. Mini-parks are usually playgrounds, tot lots, or other small scale parks within close proximity to residences. A mini-park is categorized by the NRPA as one acre or less in size. In Secaucus, Trolley Park, Acorn Park, Naters Park, Smit Park, Eckel Park, Fountain Park, and Ivanoski Park are mini-parks. Fountain Park is somewhat larger, but because of its limited use, functions more as a mini-park than a neighborhood park.

The NRPA recommends that neighborhood parks be 15 acres or larger. A neighborhood park provides recreational sports fields, playgrounds, and open space but is also not intended for community-wide use. Typically, the parks are replicated throughout the community and commonly constitute home parks for youth sports organizations and serve a definable neighborhood, but are not serving a need in the whole community. In Secaucus, there are no parks that serve these roles. The sports fields and playgrounds at Clarendon School would constitute a neighborhood park if they were owned by the municipality.

Community parks should be at least 25 acres but preferably larger and are commonly multifunctional entities intended for a wide variety of recreation. In Secaucus where land is scarce, the communitywide facilities are typically smaller. Buchmuller Park, for instance, is only 5.42 acres but serves a wide variety of users from all over the Town. Aside from Buchmuller Park, Mill Creek Point Park, the Mill Ridge Ball Fields, Schmidt's Woods, Kane Stadium and Shetik Field provide town-wide facilities. The two indoor recreation centers also serve this purpose. Laurel Hill Park serves as a communitywide facility though it is not owned by the municipality.

The remaining municipal open space is for conservation purposes and/or passive recreation.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE ADEQUACY OF OPEN SPACE**

There are several guidelines against which the adequacy of the amount of open space and recreation facilities in the Town may be measured. The adequacy is determined by comparing the Town's population to its open space.

### ***NEW JERSEY GREEN ACRES PROGRAM***

The Green Acres program recommends a minimum of 3% of the developed and developable acreage of the municipal land area be earmarked for open space purposes. "Developable" excludes vacant land with wetlands, slopes over 12%, and existing preserved open space. About 6% of the land area of Secaucus is vacant and undevelopable, leaving 4.6% vacant and developable, with water occupying 6.9% of its areal extent. The developed portion of Secaucus is approximately 88.3%. The calculation thus yields a minimum standard of 113 acres. The Town, which has 202 acres of open space<sup>5</sup>, easily meets the minimum standard. Secaucus has a current estimated population of 18,351 people<sup>6</sup>. Looking to the future, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority completed forecasts for each municipality within its jurisdiction, including Secaucus. Its long range forecast for the Town's population in 2040 is 22,840 people, an annualized increase of 1.1% per year<sup>7</sup>. This is a fairly slow rate of growth and could only be realized if portions of Secaucus' non-residential land uses were converted to residential use as occurred with the Xchange at Secaucus Junction development near the train station.

Whether the additional 4,500± people forecast for 2040 will have a discernible effect on the demand for recreation will depend on the demographic mix of new residents. If any new housing is to be constructed, it is likely to be multi-family because of the economics of converting non-residential land to residential use as well as the redevelopment policies of the NJ Meadowlands Commission. As the Xchange development has demonstrated, there are few school-aged children that come from transit-oriented neighborhoods. Consequently, there may be little effect on youth sports organizations and the demand for sports fields. On the other hand, if the Town continues to see an influx of people from the Indian sub-continent as the single family detached housing stock turns over to a younger generation, demand for cricket and soccer could be expected to increase.

### ***NATIONAL PARK AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES***

The NRPA has published a number of standards for "developed" open space. While the organization has moved away from a gross acreage basis for determining recreational needs (preferring a survey of users, instead), a range of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed park land per 1,000 residents had been previously used by them in

---

<sup>5</sup> - Table 1 acreage minus the Secaucus Recreation Center and Secaucus Youth and Teen Center.

<sup>6</sup> - American Fact Finder, <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

<sup>7</sup> - PLAN 2040 FORECASTS: Population, Households, and Employment, April 26, 2013, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority.

estimating the necessary land area. It should be noted that these standards are exclusive of recreational facilities provided by school districts or other governments. By calculation, the amount of active recreation space should be a minimum of 115 to 193 acres of developed park land. The Town is below this range, with 61.63 acres<sup>8</sup>, or 3.36 acres per 1,000 people in active recreation space.

These two measures of open space adequacy taken together indicate that overall the municipality has an adequate amount of open space but lacks sites for active recreational use. To a degree, this lack is made up by the use and accessibility of Laurel Hill Park. Laurel Hill Park is easily accessible to Secaucus residents, but considerably less so for other Hudson County residents. The Town's Recreation Department makes use of the athletic fields for scheduling youth and adult sports through the cooperation of the County's Division of Parks. Furthermore, the County has seven other parks in Bayonne, Harrison/Kearny, Hoboken, Jersey City, North Bergen and Union that are more accessible by public transportation. Consequently, Laurel Hill Park is well used by Secaucus residents. If its 98.95 acres of active recreation are added to the 61.63 acres of municipal active recreation, then the total of 160.58 acres places it squarely in the middle of the range of developed park acreage by the NRPA.

#### **SECAUCUS ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION PARK PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SURVEY**

The Secaucus Environmental Commission issued a survey to residents and other users of the Town's park lands. The survey was posted online on the municipal website and paper copies were made available at various locations including Town Hall and the Secaucus Recreation Center. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix A at the end of the document.

The survey responses were focused on certain maintenance items in Schmidt's Woods, Acorn Park, Buchmuller Park, and at Clarendon School which can be addressed by the Recreation and Public Works Departments. One set of comments, however, helped solidify a decision to remove the skateboard ramps from Buchmuller Park. The level of resources necessary to keep the skateboard park operational were such that it was removed, fixed, and sold to another municipality in order to ensure funds for the proper maintenance of the rest of the Town's park system. Respondents requested drinking fountains and additional trash receptacles at Buchmuller Park.

---

<sup>8</sup> - Table 1 acreage minus open space for conservation purposes and the conservation area of Mill Ridge Ball Fields (22.98 acres).

Though the survey asked about future facilities and in particular the acquisition of the abandoned Laminations-by-Design factory, no results were recorded concerning additional open space acquisition.

The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission was noticed concerning the public hearing scheduled for adopted on January 3, 2014 and informally staff was asked for comments concerning the plan. No comment was received. Lastly, the Planning Board held a public hearing on the adoption of the Plan at its February 18, 2014 meeting which was noticed in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-12*).

### RECREATION PROGRAMS

The Secaucus Recreation Department oversees the recreational programs offered by the municipality, schedules fields and the use of buildings, and coordinates the use of school facilities and Laurel Hill Park for municipal recreation at those locations. It coordinates with the Department of Public Works for maintenance of the parks.

In Secaucus, the following programs are offered by the Department:

Fall: Cheerleading, Football, and Soccer

Winter: Boys' Basketball, Figure Skating, Girls' Basketball, Gymnastics, Hockey, Men's Basketball, and Wrestling

Spring: American Legion Baseball, Girls' Softball, Koufax Baseball, Men's Softball, Spring Soccer, and Women's Softball

Summer: Arts & Crafts, Basketball Camp, Bocce Ball, Boys' Basketball, Day Care Camp (4-6 year olds), Girls' Basketball, Girls' Softball (K- 2nd Grade), Junior Police Academy, Pee Wee Baseball, Performing Arts, Skateboard Clinic, Special Needs Children's Camp, Summer Day Camp (7-12 year olds), Swim Team, T-Ball, and Tennis.

In addition, the Department schedules a seven-week summer concert series held at the amphitheater at Buchmuller Park. The Department also operates an after school program for children in grades Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> each day when school is open until 6 pm in Clarendon and Hubert Schools.

### ACTIVE RECREATION NEEDS

The demand for athletic fields for youth and adult leagues and programs continues to grow. While some sports can share fields because they are in different seasons, there

is a trend towards year round or three seasons in a single sport. Additional factors include a strong trend in Secaucus towards more sports participation by girls and efforts to involve more adults in active sports as the value of better fitness becomes more apparent over time. The opening of the new Recreation Center in 2007 greatly aided in providing additional indoor sports and fitness opportunities for residents but was not able to address the demand for more fields. Further, an influx of new residents from southern Asian has sparked an interest in the sport of cricket which requires a large field area. Unlike many places in New Jersey, there are no fields for field hockey, lacrosse or rugby and consequently no school athletic teams or adult leagues in these other sports. More fields would aid in addressing existing and future demand. However, land resources in Secaucus are seriously limited. As noted, most of the remaining land that is sufficiently large for additional sports fields also is environmentally sensitive and not suitable for athletic use. Larger parcels that are not environmentally sensitive typically are landfills, such as the Malanka landfills in the southeast end of the Town (Block 3, Lot 4 and Block 7, Lot 4) and the Mori Properties tract (Block 227, pt. Lot 9). The most suitable site is the athletic fields associated with the former Panasonic electronics company headquarters on Meadowlands Parkway which have the advantage of already being improved for recreation. Furthermore, the Town is already leasing these fields for recreation purposes from Matsushita Electric Corporation, the parent company of Panasonic. Their conversion to developed lots would reduce the available sports fields and courts under use in Secaucus. It should also be noted that this site is identified as a potential affordable housing site in the 2008 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, so the continued use of the property for recreation will require a reassessment of the means whereby the Town is able to meet its *Mt. Laurel* housing obligation.

Proper maintenance also requires that fields periodically rest to aerate the soil and keep grass growing. Because of the pressure on field use, field resting rarely occurs and consequently field conditions become rough and maintenance costs rise. In Secaucus, as elsewhere in the state, this has been partially addressed by the installation of artificial turf fields that withstand the heavy use and can also be configured for more than one sport. Kane Stadium was the first facility to be reconstructed with an artificial turf field. Shetik Field was recently converted to artificial turf which greatly expanded the use of the park for sports purposes. Tennis, for example, was added to the park. The Recreation Department is now contemplating the cost of converting some of the fields at Mill Ridge Ball Fields to artificial turf.

The Secaucus Youth and Teen Center was built in the downtown area as the Town's first indoor recreation center. The building's internal configuration makes it difficult

to repurpose its space to create a more efficient design. At the present time the Recreation Department uses it for youth basketball on a shortened court (up to 6<sup>th</sup> grade). The Department would also like to use the space for volleyball, though the headroom is compromised by structural elements. The main gymnasium floor also needs to be rebuilt to make it suitable for basketball and volleyball use and the Department is seeking funds to replace it.

**OPEN SPACE NEEDS**

Active recreation in Secaucus, while perhaps the most visible manifestation of open space, is only one component of a comprehensive open space plan. Non-active open space provides benefits for the ecology of the Town and region by supporting environmentally sensitive lands such as flood plains, freshwater wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, and the biota that depends on natural systems. Open space creates vistas of scenic beauty; preserves view sheds of historic properties, and provides a setting for buildings and people. Maintaining and preserving open space in the face of development pressure is very difficult especially in an era of municipal budget cuts stemming from the Great Recession. The land remaining undeveloped in Secaucus is sought for many different and often competing purposes. The ability to acquire additional open space is limited and as time marches on, these opportunities will recede over time. Investment in open space today will yield far reaching benefits for the future.

*POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE ACQUISITIONS*

In Table 4, seven sites have been identified for potential preservation as open space. A description and rationale for the possible acquisitions follows the table.

Table 4. Sites Identified for Potential Open Space Acquisition.

Key	Owner	Blocks	Lots	Acres	Comments
A	Plycloth Associates of NJ	203	42	0.53	Former Laminations-by-Estelle factory; next to Acorn Park
B	Farm Road Realties	203	41	0.29	Factory parking lot
C	Matsushita Electric Corp. of America	52	4.03	5.00	Sports fields and courts of former Panasonic headquarters
D	Mori Properties	227	Pt. 9	83.25	Wetlands portion of lot east of the Plaza at Harmon Meadow
E	PSE&G Power, LLC	3	7	13.03	Hackensack River corridor; next to Fish Creek Marsh
F	County Road, LLC	44	4	10.54	Penhorn Creek corridor; on Hudson County Green Map
G	Sinai Associates, Inc.	46	1	3.25	Penhorn Creek corridor
<b>TOTAL POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE PARCELS</b>				<b>115.89</b>	

PLYCLOTH ASSOCIATES OF NJ AND FARM ROAD REALTIES (A, B) – From a real estate perspective these are two separate parcels by different owners but will be treated as one site for land use purposes. The factory formerly made laminated cloth but has been closed for a number of years. The factory is owned by Laminations-by-Estelle which is in the same business as when it was operated by Plycloth. The site is located in between Acorn Park to the west and an open space parcel owned by the NJ Meadowlands Commission to the east. On the other side of the Commission's land is the Riverwalk Access road that connects to the north end of Farm Road. The factory is also an anomaly in that the building is in a residential neighborhood at the end of a very narrow lane. The building is also located in the flood hazard zone of the Hackensack River. Acquisition of the property would allow for the expansion of Acorn Park and complements the Commission's open space parcel. The existing parking lot of the plant could be used to provide parking for a trail head to the Riverwalk. Presently, the Riverwalk is completed from Mill Creek Point Park to Acorn Park. The hope is that the Riverwalk will be extended westward to the new Oak Lane Park and eventually to Trolley Park and points farther south (see the discussion below on the Riverwalk). Demolition of the building would also remove a structure from the flood hazard area. The properties are assessed at \$340,500, or \$638,238 true value on an equalized basis. Acquisition by Secaucus is recommended for active and passive recreation.

MATSUSHITA ELECTRIC CORP. OF AMERICA – Better known by one of its home electronics brands, Panasonic, this site was its former American headquarters until decamping for Newark in August 2013. Whether by design or turning unused land to another purpose, a five-acre area at the north end of the property was developed with a baseball/softball field, three tennis courts, a basketball court and a hard-surfaced volleyball court. Secaucus presently leases the property for baseball use. As discussed in the section on Active Recreation, the Town faces significant demand for sports fields. The site is large enough for a multi-purpose field and if constructed with artificial turf, would help ease the demand for sports fields. The entire property is assessed at \$1,625,000 or \$3,045,923 true value on an equalized basis. Acquisition by Secaucus is recommended for active recreation.

MORI PROPERTIES – This site is the largest undeveloped site in the Town and is located between Harmon Meadows and North Bergen Township. At one time construction debris was used to fill the front portion of the site, which was originally intended for a horse race track (Eugene Mori constructed the original horse race track in Cherry Hill, NJ). Though the tract is nearly 136 acres, about 83.25 acres of the land is marsh associated with the tidal Chromakill Creek and is part of the Eastern Brackish Marsh. This L-shaped parcel is not suitable for development and would complement the work undertaken to restore the Mill Creek Marsh that is located on the west side of the NJ Turnpike as well as the part

of the Eastern Brackish Marsh directly to the north of the subject property. The two marshes are hydrologically connected underneath the Turnpike. The entire property is assessed for \$14,000,000 but this includes the more valuable developable land at the south end of the property. Since it is the marshland to the north that is of interest for land preservation, a more accurate means of estimating value is to use the per acre assessed value of the Mill Creek Marsh which has virtually identical characteristics. That per acre assessed value is \$3,866, or \$7,247 on an equalized assessment basis. Using these figures, the 83.25 acres would have an equalized assessment of \$603,323. Acquisition by the NJ Meadowlands Commission is recommended for conservation purposes.

PSE&G POWER, LLC – This property is a marshy site on the west side of Penhorn Creek from the PSE&G electrical generating facility in Jersey City. The site contains high voltage transmission line towers that parallel a Conrail rail line (the southernmost of the lines that crisscross Secaucus). This land would complement that Fish Creek Marsh property owned by the Town as well as other parcels that have been preserved by the NJ Meadowlands Commission and Hudson County. This area is identified as wetlands for preservation by the NJMC. The assessed value is \$488,600 or \$915,839 on an equalized assessment basis. Acquisition by the Commission for conservation purposes is recommended minus any necessary easements to maintain the power plant's transmission capabilities.

COUNTY ROAD, LLC – Located on County Road 653, which is also known as County Road, the parcel is also adjacent to Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Line. The northern part of the property is tidal marsh associated with the Penhorn Creek. The southern part is used by the owner for an excavating and construction business. The northern parcel is shown as a future open space parcel by Hudson County on its Green Map – the County's version of an open space plan, as well as wetlands on the NJMC Green Map. Since the proposed acquisition, Lot 4, is not assessed separately from Lot 2 which is used by the business, an estimate cannot be reasonably determined. Acquisition by Hudson County is recommended for conservation purposes.

SINAI ASSOCIATES, INC. – Located at the end of Penhorn Avenue, this parcel is the undeveloped portion of the Sinai Associates building on the adjacent lot. Acquisition of this property would continue with the policy of protecting stream corridors in Hudson County, which is one of the purposes of their open space plan<sup>9</sup>. The assessed value is \$310,800 or \$582,568 on an equalized assessment basis. Acquisition by Hudson County is recommended for conservation

---

<sup>9</sup> - Open Space Plan Goals and Objectives, Hudson County Open Space Advisory Committee, p. 12

purposes, though a conservation easement would provide a similar level of protection of this natural resource.

Municipal parks and recreational facilities, Town-owned open space, public or community recreation sites, and potential open space sites are depicted on the attached Open Space and Recreation Plan at the end of this document.

### ***HACKENSACK RIVERWALK***

Ongoing acquisition of additional land is a large part of the development of Secaucus' open space system, but does not fully account for the means of completing a network of open space. The creation of pathways and bicycle trails as greenways to connect open space expands recreational opportunities in Secaucus. This aids in seeing open space as an organic system of nodes and connections in much the same way as the Town has a connected street system or utilities and as important as either of these to the healthy functioning of the municipality.

The Hackensack Riverwalk is conceived as a greenway with paved pathways along the edge of the river that runs from Mill Creek Point Park in the north end of Secaucus to Laurel Hill Park in the south on the west side of the municipality. While a substantial effort was made to keep the walkway directly adjacent to the water, it is not feasible in a number of locations. The walkway skirts the Harmon Cove neighborhood, for example, because many houses were built directly on the water. Path users must also use the Meadowlands Parkway bridge over the Paterson and Hudson Branch of Conrail's rail lines. The Riverwalk provides a connection with twelve open space parcels and three additional proposed sites. With its completion, the Riverwalk will be 5.83 miles long. As opportunities arise, portions of the Riverwalk will be constructed as part of the redevelopment process. Portions of the walkway have been constructed as part of the Xchange at Secaucus Junction and Riverside Court developments. Furthermore, the Riverwalk is also part of Hudson County's Green Map.

### **CONSERVATION TECHNIQUES**

There are a number of methods of preserving open space apart from direct purchase by government or by a private nonprofit conservation organization. Purchasing large tracts of land in fee simple is expensive and other avenues may be explored in order to fulfill the Town's open space goals. Techniques discussed here to conserve land include purchase or donation of development rights, conservation easements, and site design.

### *PURCHASE OR DONATION OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS*

Under the "bundle of rights" theory of property ownership, development rights are an additional right inherent in a property along with the better known air, water, and mineral rights. Development rights may be separated from the property and sold or donated to governmental agencies or conservation organizations. The sale of development rights requires the landowner to pay federal capital gains taxes which may be offset depending on the individual landowner's tax situation. The donation of these rights, however, can be treated as a charitable contribution and provide the donor with a tax deduction. The sale of development rights also reduces the property assessment for tax purposes. Since development rights are less than fee simple ownership, their cost is substantially less.

### *CONSERVATION EASEMENTS*

The dedication of easements is a technique sometimes used to preserve wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas. While retaining ownership in private hands, conservation easements effectively protect lands of ecological importance. Donation of an easement and donation of development rights have similar tax advantages. Donations may include other general benefits, such as public access. Private nonprofit conservation organizations in the state are substantially involved in identifying prospective properties and working with interested land owners in securing conservation easements.

### *SITE DESIGN*

Site design – the layout of buildings, circulation, and utilities – is the single largest factor in the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands. Restricting the use of environmentally sensitive lands, usually also protected by state environmental regulations, is a common condition of development approvals. To achieve the best results, design should be guided by a development suitability map that shows the environmental constraints of the land. From this starting point, a design sensitive to the preservation of natural and environmentally sensitive features may be produced. However, of natural resources that may be preserved this way, the land development approvals jurisdiction lies with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission. As indicated in the Goals and Objectives statement, engaging with the Meadowlands Commission to reach a Memorandum of Understanding on conservation easements is one means of preserving natural resources at low cost. Likewise, the second new objective for recreation and open space is to create development incentives to provide public park amenities. This will take considerable dialogue with NJMC officials and likely rule amendments, but the end result will be a better connected and more attractive open space network.

### **FUNDING FOR OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION**

Purchasing the acreage necessary to establish additional parks and other open space is a significant financial cost to the Town (see preceding section for a discussion on other techniques for conservation protection). The traditional method of funding acquisitions is through the state Green Acres Program, which provides low cost loans for open space acquisition. However, the 1998 bond referendum that established a \$98 million per year fund for a ten year period for this and other purposes has now run its course. The state legislative and executive branches of government have not yet determined how additional open space purchases may occur. Assuming that a means of funding additional open space acquisition is reached, Secaucus would apply to the Green Acres Program for funding under its strictures in place at the time and would utilize its bonding capacity for meeting its share of the costs.

### **ACTION PLAN FOR OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

The following actions are recommended to fulfill the goals and objectives for open space in Secaucus:

- 1) Use this document for participation in the Green Acres Planning Incentive Grant Program.
- 2) Engage the NJ Meadowlands Commission to establish two Memoranda of Understandings for the establishment of conservation easements and development incentives for open space donation and improvement.
- 3) Seek to acquire the closed Laminations-by-Estelle factory and the former Panasonic headquarters sports fields for municipal use.
- 4) Engage with Hudson County and the NJ Meadowlands Commission on the acquisition of the remaining proposed open space parcels.
- 5) Seek donations of land and funds for open space and recreation improvements.

## Appendix A

### Secaucus Environmental Commission Survey

The Secaucus Environmental Commission is conducting a public survey about improving the town's public parks. The Commission has been awarded a grant from ANJEC to help the town improve its open space parks. Your feedback will be considered in improving the Town's parks.

#### Secaucus Open Spaces

Name	Location	Type	Acres
Schmidt's Woods Park	Mill Ridge Road	Passive Recreation, Picnic Area, Playground	17.457
Buchmuller Park	Plaza Center	Baseball with Concession Stand, Basketball, Skateboarding, Bocce, Ice Skating, Concerts, Movies, Other Events	5.425
Kane Stadium	Dorigo Lane	Football, Baseball	4.465
Shetik Field	County Ave/Jeff Ave	Baseball, Street Hockey, Soccer, Tennis, Basketball	3.401
Snipes Park	Hackensack River	Passive Recreation co-owned with HMDC	3.010
Duck Pond	Helen Street	Fishing Pond	2.580
Eckel Park	Ninth Street	Playground	0.623
Mill Creek Point	Huber Street	Bulkhead, Boat Launch, Playground, Dog Park	0.500
Ivanoski Place	Charles Street	Playground	0.220
Blondel Park	Koelle Blvd	Playground	0.220
Smit Park	Valley Court	Playground	0.100

*Based on the above open spaces, please answer the questions below in as much detail as possible. Please print clearly.*

Please indicate which of the below parks you have visited in the past twelve months.

v	Name
	Schmidt's Woods Park
	Buchmuller Park
	Kane Stadium
	Shetik Field
	Snipes Park
	Duck Pond
	Eckel Park
	Mill Creek Point
	Ivanoski Place
	Blondel Park
	Smit Park

Please indicate which of the below parks you regularly frequent.

<b>v</b>	<b>Name</b>
	Schmidt's Woods Park
	Buchmuller Park
	Kane Stadium
	Shetik Field
	Snipes Park
	Duck Pond
	Eckel Park
	Mill Creek Point
	Ivanoski Place
	Blondel Park
	Smit Park

What attracts you to the location that you frequent regularly?

<b>v</b>	<b>Reason</b>
	Location to my home
	Type of amenities at the park
	Cleanliness of the park
	Flowers/Plantings at the park
	Night Lights
	Other:

What suggestions can you make for the Town to improve the location(s) you frequent regularly?

Based on any of the locations you do not regularly frequent, what could the Town do to make that location more appealing to you?

What can the Town do to make any of the locations more accessible to the physically handicapped?

What would you like to see more of in Secaucus, such as tennis courts, walking trails, biking paths or trails, bocce courts, basketball courts, street hockey courts, skateboard parks, butterfly garden, plant identification, etc. Please be specific.

Are you familiar with the abandoned Laminations-by-Estelle facility located at Acorn Court?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Choose One
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

If the Town purchases the above abandoned Acorn property, what do you think the best use of the property should be?

Are there any other abandoned facilities in Secaucus that you would like to see remediated by the Town and what suggestions do you have for making this location usable for the Secaucus residents?

