



# NEWS

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## **Hillsborough Twp. Awarded \$40,000 State Grant to Help Plan for Growth to Protect Farmland, Natural Resources**

Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus announced today that the state Transfer of Development Rights Bank Board has awarded Hillsborough Township a \$40,000 matching grant to help plan for growth in a way that protects its farmland and natural resources.

“More than 2,200 acres of farmland have been permanently preserved in Hillsborough Township under the Farmland Preservation Program,” noted Secretary Kuperus, who chairs the State TDR Bank Board. “TDR is a complementary tool that will allow Hillsborough to further its efforts to protect its productive agricultural working landscape and rural character while providing for planned growth to occur in designated, suitable areas.”

“It is essential that we preserve open space while targeting development to areas appropriate for growth,” said Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Susan Bass Levin. “By taking advantage of this powerful tool, Hillsborough is protecting farmland and environmentally sensitive land, investing in its future and improving the quality of life for its residents.”

“By encouraging growth in designated areas, we can protect Hillsborough’s farmland and one of New Jersey’s most beautiful natural treasures – the Sourlands Mountain Preserve, which is home to a variety of wildlife including a number of threatened and endangered birds and rare plants,” said Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Lisa P. Jackson.

The TDR Bank Board will provide Hillsborough Township with a \$20,000 check that represents the first installment in the planning assistance grant. Hillsborough will be eligible for the remaining \$20,000 once it has developed a TDR ordinance and submitted it to the State Planning Commission.

Hillsborough intends to implement a TDR program to preserve its agricultural district – which includes approximately 4,200 acres in active agricultural use – and the Sourland Mountain region in the western portion of the township, as well as approximately 4,600 acres of farmland elsewhere in the township. Development will be directed to a proposed mixed-use town center at the crossroads of Route 206 and Amwell Road, a potential transit-oriented village district along the West Trenton Rail Line and a proposed corporate center along Amwell Road between the transit-oriented village and the Borough of Millstone.

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TDR programs are designed to encourage a shift in growth away from a municipality's critical agricultural, environmentally sensitive or historic lands – referred to as sending areas – to designated growth areas known as receiving areas. Landowners in sending areas can sell their development rights or credits to developers who are able to use them to build elsewhere in a receiving area at a higher density than normally allowed in a town's zoning ordinance. Once TDR credits are sold from a sending area property, that property is permanently preserved.

Before a TDR ordinance is adopted, a municipality must complete a number of planning activities. These include preparation of a development transfer plan element of its municipal master plan that identifies sending and receiving areas, analyzes anticipated population and economic growth, and establishes the planning objectives and design standards that will be used to review applications for development in the receiving area. Other required planning activities include preparation of a utility service plan element, a real estate analysis and a capital improvement program to ensure the receiving area will have the capacity to accommodate the increased growth. Grant funds may be used to pay for up to 50 percent of the costs of these planning activities. The maximum grant amount is \$40,000.

TDR is a planning tool that became available to municipalities statewide under the 2004 New Jersey State Transfer of Development Rights Act. Prior to that, it was available only to Burlington County municipalities under pilot programs.

The New Jersey State TDR Bank provides financial and other assistance to landowners and municipalities that enact TDR ordinances. The bank is housed within the N.J. State Agriculture Development Committee, which administers the state Farmland Preservation Program.

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