

Pilesgrove Township

Farmland Preservation Plan Update



Prepared by
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The original of this document has been signed and sealed
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Pilesgrove Township Master Plan Farmland Preservation Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28.b(13)) indicates that a municipal Master Plan may contain a farmland preservation plan element *“which shall include: an inventory of farm properties and a map illustrating significant areas of agricultural land; a statement showing that municipal ordinances support and promote agriculture as a business; and a plan for preserving as much farmland as possible in the short term by leveraging monies made available by P.L. 1999, c. 152 (C. 13:8C-1 et. al.) through a variety of mechanisms including, but not limited to, utilizing option agreements, installment purchases, and encouraging donations of permanent development easements.*

Pilesgrove Township adopted a Farmland Preservation Plan element of its Master Plan on March 1, 2004. It was the initial master plan element in the Township that focused on the protection and preservation of the community’s agricultural resources and businesses. The Plan underwent a comprehensive update in November 2012.

This Plan serves as an update to the Pilesgrove Township’s 2012 Farmland Preservation Plan Element Update, and is prepared in accord with the State Agricultural Development Committee’s (SADC) “Guidelines for Development County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plans”, originally adopted on December 14, 2006 and readopted as amended on July 25, 2019. This Plan has been prepared with funding assistance from the State Agriculture Development Committee.

DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is commonly defined as farming in all of its forms, specifically including the following:

- Cultivation and tillage of the soil;
- Production, cultivation, growing, and harvesting of any agricultural, viticultural, or horticultural commodities;
- Raising and/or breeding of livestock including but not limited to, dairy and beef cattle, sheep, goats, fur bearing animals, companion animals, poultry, and swine;

- Breeding, boarding, raising, or training of equine;
- Commercial harvesting, production, and processing of fish and shellfish, including aquaculture and marine production;
- Commercial production of bees and apiary products;
- Production of nursery, sod, floriculture, and forest products; and
- Harvesting, storage, grading, packaging, processing, distribution and sale of such commodities where such activities occur at the point of production.

PLAN GOALS/OBJECTIVES

The goal of the farmland preservation program is to retain a viable agricultural industry in Pilesgrove Township. The objectives of the Farmland Preservation Plan for Pilesgrove Township are as follows:

- To permanently preserve lands which are necessary for the retention of the agricultural industry through various methods, including fee simple and development rights acquisition programs;
- To focus public land preservation resources based on agricultural and land use planning criteria;
- To utilize clustering and planned development mechanisms to preserve lands that are not in the easement purchase program; and,
- To implement regulatory measures which will result in the protection and enhancement of agriculture in the Township.

While the goal of the farmland preservation program is the preservation of the land for agricultural purposes, it is recognized that the program will only be successful if it results in the retention of a viable agricultural economy.

PLAN STRUCTURE/FORMAT

Pilesgrove Township adopted revised Farmland Preservation Plans in December of 2007 and November 2012 that were comprehensive updates of the initial 2004 Farmland Preservation Plan. The 2007 Update was undertaken to comply with the revised regulations of the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC) in order to be eligible for Planning Incentive Grant funding and was structured in accordance with SADC guidance. The 2007 and 2012 Updates were adopted as an element of the

Township Master Plan to ensure that the Plan submitted to the SADC had the support of the municipality and had been subject to public comment.

This 2025 Plan Update is intended to expand the Township Planning Incentive Grant within the financial constraints of the Township.



I. PILESGROVE'S AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE

This section of the Pilesgrove Township Farmland Preservation Plan provides a detailed description of the agricultural characteristics and trends in the Township's agricultural lands based on available data.

1.1 LOCATION AND SIZE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE

The agricultural land base in Pilesgrove Township is approximately 16,000 acres or 25 square miles of a community that occupies 35 square miles of land area. Virtually all of the cleared land in the Township that has not been developed is devoted to some type of agricultural production. Most of the wetlands in the Township are wooded since farmers historically did not clear areas that were not tillable or which could not be modified (drained) to be tillable.

Pilesgrove Township has the second largest agricultural land base of any municipality in the State of New Jersey. Upper Pittsgrove Township, Pilesgrove's neighbor to the east, has the largest municipal agricultural land base. These two municipalities represent about 9% of the total agricultural land base in the State.

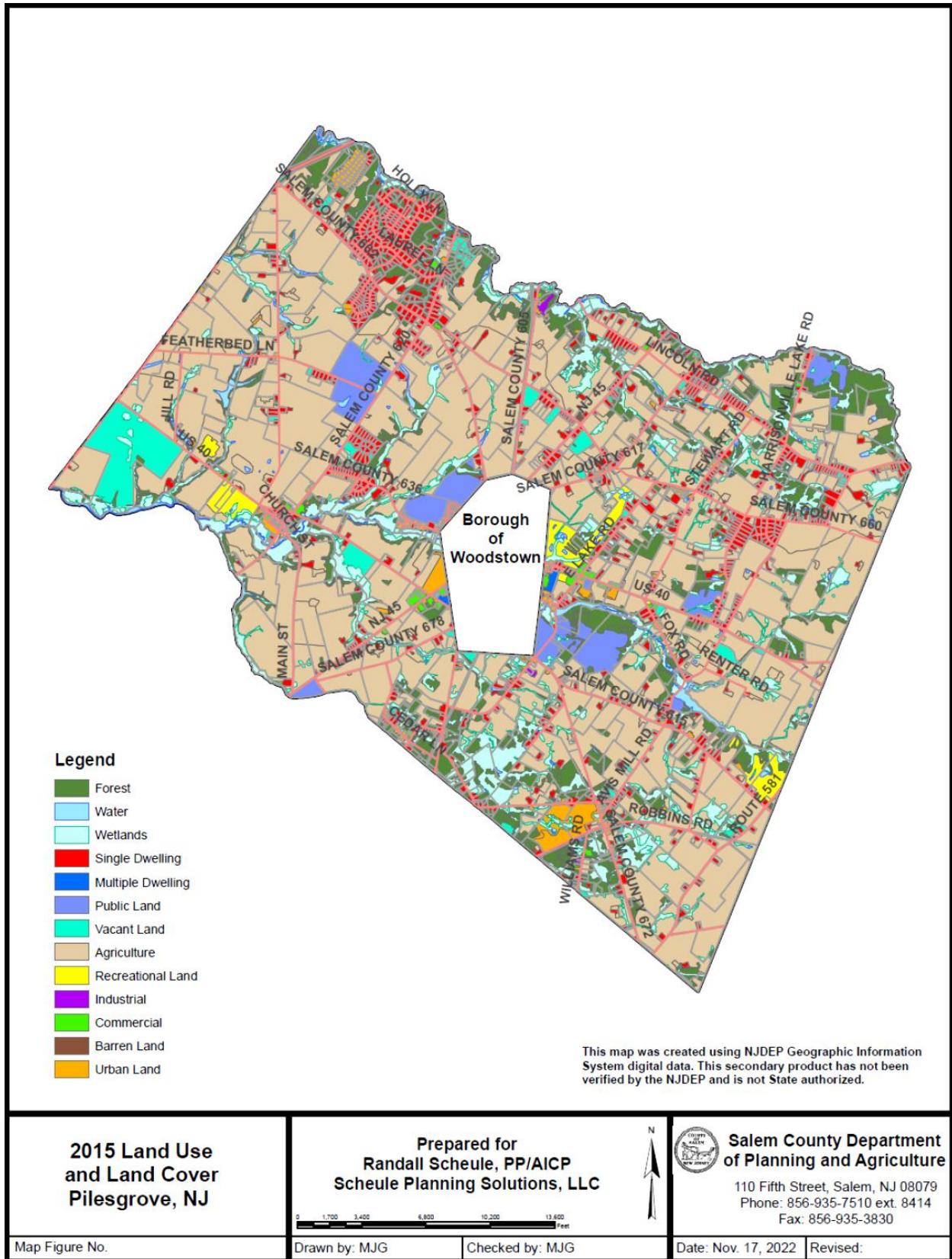
There are several sources of data regarding the agricultural land base including Farmland Assessment data and the U. S. Census of Agriculture that are discussed in this section. While all of the sources provide a consistent description of the agricultural land base, there are minor differences based on the source of the specific data. For this reason, information from one source should not be combined or compared with data from another source.

1.1.1 Existing Land Use Data

Pilesgrove Township is a rural community that surrounds Woodstown Borough. U.S. Route #40 is the primary east-west highway that bisects the community in an east-west direction and State Route #45 is a state highway of lesser importance that bisects the Township in a north-south direction. The two state highways intersect in the center of Woodstown.

Map 1: Existing Land Use provides an overview of the existing land use patterns in Pilesgrove Township based on parcel mapping, tax records, and recent land use changes. **Table 1** summarizes the generalized land use data in the Township.

Map 1: Existing Land Use



Map 1 indicates agricultural lands are located throughout the Township but are concentrated in areas where natural resources are suited for agricultural production and where land development is reduced in intensity.

Commercial development tends to be concentrated along U.S. Route 40 near Woodstown and at Cowtown. The commercial recreation land use category refers to the Cowtown flea market and rodeo, the Town & Country Golf Links, and the Four Seasons Campground.

Residential development is almost entirely composed of single-family dwellings located on large lots. The residential lots tend to be located along major roads throughout the Township in a strip pattern but moderate sized residential developments are being developed particularly along the northern fringe of the Township. The 2020 US Census indicates that there are 1,568 households, and 1,658 housing units in the Township. Eighty-six percent of the housing units are single-family units. Tax records list 216 of these units as farmhouse exclusions (Code 3A) on 325 acres.

Table 1
Pilesgrove Township
Generalized Land Use

<u>Land Use Category</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Percent</u>
One- & two-family Residential	2,364.3	12.1
Residential Apartment	22.2	0.1
Commercial	654.7	3.3
Regular Farm	324.8	1.6
Qualified Farm	16,096.6	82.4
Public School	23.8	0.1
Public Property	1,329.6	6.8
Church, Charitable	27.5	0.1
Cemetery	38.4	0.2
Other Exempt	127.2	0.6
Vacant	638.5	3.3
Total	19,517.6	100.0

Source: Pilesgrove Assessor's 2022 Data, compiled by Scheule Planning Solutions, LLC.

1.1.2 Qualified Farmland Data

Table 2 indicates the trend in qualified farmland in the Township from 1984-2018. The SADC data in this Table indicates that the acres committed to agricultural use has gradually declined from 1991 through 2008. However, the farmland assessment acreage recorded in 2012 was slightly higher than that in 2008, and a slight increase also occurred between 2012 and 2018. According to 2021 Tax Assessor's data, acreage in Pilesgrove identified as Regular Farmland 3A (324.88 acres) and Qualified Farmland 3B (16,046.67 acres) totals 32,743.09 acres.

Table 3 indicates the trend in qualified farmland in Salem County from 1984-2018. The SADC data in this Table indicates that the acres committed to agricultural use in the County increased slightly from 1984 to 2001, then declined slightly in 2004, and remained steady from 2004 and 2005, and experienced a slight increase in 2006. According to 2019 tax assessment records, the County has approximately 119,470 acres of assessed farmland, making up 56.8% of the County's total land area. The 2022 Salem County Farmland Preservation Plan, indicates Pilesgrove farmland totals 16,504 acres accounting for 13.8% of total farmland in the county.

Table 4 indicates the qualified farmland acreage by zoning district in the Township. Almost 2/3rds of the farmland assessed acreage in the Township is within the Agricultural Retention (AR) zoning district.

Chart 1 graphically depicts the qualified farmland trends. The chart indicates that there was a slight increase in qualified farmland, and the acreage committed to harvested cropland between 2012 and 2018. The percentage of woodlands and wetlands included in the agricultural use categories is consistently lower in Pilesgrove Township than in the entire County.

Table 2
Pilesgrove Township - Farmland Trends

Category	1984	1991	2001	2004	2005	2006	2008	2012	2018
Cropland Harvested	10,950	12,208	12,210	11,925	12,017	11,734	10,877	11,614	11,667
Cropland Pastured	1,114	627	589	650	600	588	522	246	27
Permanent Pasture	2,885	2812	2,473	2,547	2,427	2,403	2,367	2,272	1,971
Unattached Woodlands	NA	290	473	376	418	381	445	369	613
Attached Woodlands/Wetlands	1,669	1,429	1,482	1,443	1,438	1,386	1,247	1,366	1,438
Equine	NA	NA	19	34	20	38	61	61	36
Renewable Energy	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1
Total Ag Use	17,421	17366	17,246	16,975	16,920	16,528	15,519	15,928	15,997
Non-Agricultural Use	794	533	407	428	385	359	0	202	282
Total Qualified Farmland	17,421	17,900	17,653	17,403	17,305	16,887	15,519	16,251	16,279
Ag Use Percent Prior Year	NA	104.5%	99.3%	98.4%	99.7%	97.7%	93.9%	103.6%	100.2%

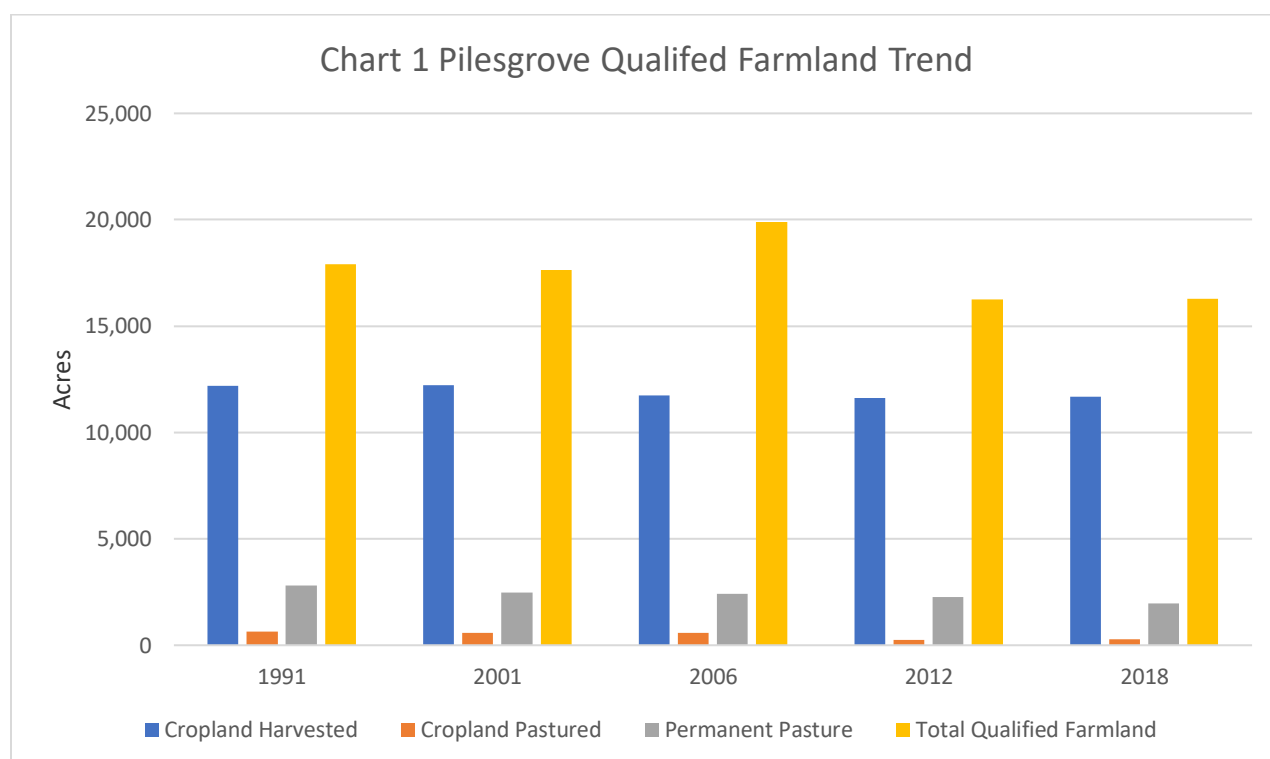
Table 3
Salem County - Farmland Trends

Category	1984	1991	2001	2004	2005	2006	2018
Cropland Harvested	75,751	74,967	78,624	77,236	76,851	75,744	73,398
Cropland Pastured	3,990	3,494	3,086	3,263	3,135	3,370	2,024
Permanent Pasture	2,885	9,664	8,659	8,398	8,215	8,557	7,135
Unattached Woodlands	NA	4,056	8,433	7,712	8,319	7,913	12,602
Attached Woodlands/Wetlands	27,748	24,572	24,174	23,501	23,948	24,258	16,832
Equine	NA	NA	247	289	313	38	224
Renewable Energy	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	22
Total Ag Use	116,815	116,753	123,223	120,489	120,781	119,880	12,237
Non-Agricultural Use	11,246	5,090	4,034	3,701	3,336	3,406	3,887
Total Qualified Farmland	128,160	121,843	127,257	124,190	124,117	123,534	128,361
Ag Use Percent of Prior Year	NA	NA	105.5%	97.8%	100.2%	99.3%	104.1%

Source: NJSADC

Table 4
Pilesgrove Township – Qualified Farmland by Zoning District

Agricultural Retention	Single-family Residential	Restricted Residential	Village Neighborhood/PRD	Commercial	Industrial	Total
10,235.8 Acres	1,904.4 Acres	2,973.3 Acres	43.6 Acres	312.5 Acres	453.8 Acres	15,923.4 Acres
64.3%	12.0%	18.7%	0.3%	2.0%	2.8%	100.0%



Census of Agriculture

Tables 5 & 6 summarize the data from the U.S. Census of Agriculture (Census) that is conducted every five years. **Table 5** compares certain key statistics and trends for New Jersey and Salem County. Detailed information is not provided by the Census at the municipal level. **Table 6** presents the partial data that is available for the 08098 zip code, which primarily includes Pilesgrove Township.

NEW JERSEY

Land in farms. According to the Census, New Jersey had 1.67 million acres of land in farms in 1954, 733,450 acres in 2007, and 734,084 in 2017. Therefore, the land in farms in 2007 was only 44% of that in the mid-1950's. While the census data indicates that the conversion rate slowed in the early 1990's, the acreage loss from 2002 to 2007 in the State was over 72,000 acres, which is an area more than three times the entire Township of Pilesgrove. Therefore, farmland preservation efforts during this time did not prevent substantial farmland conversion. Land in farms increased by 634 acres between 2007 and 2017. The average farm size increased from 71 acres in 2007 to 74 acres in 2017.

Number of farms. There were 10,327 farms in 2007, 9,071 in 2012 and 9,883 in 2017. The fluctuations in farmland and farm size may be attributable to lands being developed or converted into other land uses.

Harvested Cropland. Harvested cropland has steadily declined to about 416,000 acres in 2007 or about 57% of the total land in farms. There were 408,993 acres of harvested cropland in 2012, and an increase to 411,785 acres in 2017. Irrigated land acreage remains high.

SALEM COUNTY

Land in farms. According to the Census, Salem County had over 125,000 acres of land in farms in 1954. By the end of the 1970's the land in farms in the County was less than 100,000 acres. However, the Census indicates that the land in farms in Salem County has been stable for the last 20 years. In fact, the farm acreage in 2007 was reported to be virtually the same as that in 1982. The US Agriculture Census reports the County had 660 farms in 1997, the lowest reported to date, 825 farms in 2012, and 781 farms in 2017.

Farm size. The 2007 census data indicates that the average farm in the county has declined from 149 acres in 1982 to 127 acres in 2007. The median size farm is only 40 acres, which means that there are a large number of very small farms in the County.

The average farm size in Salem County in 2017 was 126 acres. In 2017 there were 526 farms in the 1-49 acre category. The Census also reported 195 farms (50 to 499 acres), and 60 farms with 500 or more acres.

Market value. The census reported that the market value of agricultural products sold in the County in 1982 was \$41.2 million and that this value increased to \$80.0 million in 2007. The average per farm value increased from \$63,524 in 1982 to \$105,400 in 2007. Total market value in 2012 was \$111.9 million which slipped to \$102.3 million in 2017.

Occupation. According to the Census, the number of persons listing their primary occupation as farming in the County increased from 354 persons in 1982 to 404 persons in 2002.

PILESGROVE TOWNSHIP

Table 6 presents the limited data available for the 08098 zip code that primarily consists of Pilesgrove Township. NJDEP's 2015 land cover data identifies 29,575 acres in agricultural use, with 94% of this acreage being used for cropland and pastureland. This information is portrayed graphically on Map 1. The 2017 Census data indicates that the approximately 78% of the farms in the Township were less than 50 acres in size and that 80% of the farms reported an average value of products sold under \$50,000. The Census data also indicated that 133 (79%) farmers were listed as full owners and that 134 farms had the principal operator living on the farm.

Table 5
U. S. Census of Agriculture – Summary Data

Category	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002		2017
New Jersey							
Number of Farms	8,237	9,032	9,079	9,101			9,883
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		9.1	0.5	0.2	9.0		
Land in Farms	916,331	894,426	847,595	832,600	805,692		734,084
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		-2.4	-5.2	-1.8	-3.2		
Average Size of Farms	111	99	93	91	81		74
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		-10.8	-6.1	-2.2	-11		
Market Value of Products (\$M)	436.0	496.0	533.0	697.4	750.0		1,097
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		13.8	7.5	30.8	7.5		
Total Cropland	669,618	642,534	623,466	594,928	547,668		463,019
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		-4.0	-3.0	-4.6	-7.9		
Harvested Cropland	570,031	484,805	491,518	485,187	444,670		411,785
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		-15.0	1.4	-1.3	-8.4		
Irrigated Land	83,049	91,208	80,409	92,965	96,893		86,819
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		9.8	-11.8	15.6	4.2		

Salem County						
Number of Farms	648	697	752	660	753	781
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		7.6	7.9	-12.2	14.1	
Land in Farms	96,585	95,265	98,256	92,047	96,238	98,239
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		-1.4	3.1	-6.3	4.6	
Average Size of Farms	149	137	131	139	128	126
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		-8.1	-4.4	6.1	-7.9	
Market Value of Products (\$M)	41.2	49.9	54.4	67.9	72.5	102.3
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		21.2	9.0	24.8	6.8	
Total Cropland	79,207	78,751	81,004	75,066	77,228	77,776
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		-0.6	2.9	-7.3	2.9	
Harvested Cropland	68,61	63,080	68,733	65,803	66,815	74,941
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		-8.1	9.0	-4.3	1.5	
Irrigated Land	14,898	17,251	13,964	18,227	19,147	17,142
<i>Change from Prior Census</i>		15.8	-19.1	30.5	5.0	

Source: 2017 U. S. Census of Agriculture

Table 6
U. S. Census of Agriculture – Summary Data (Pilesgrove)

<u>Farm Size</u>		
	<u>2002</u>	2017
1-49 Acres	95	131
50-999 Acres	61	31
1,000+ Acres	5	7
Total	161	169
<u>Value of Products</u>		
Less than \$50,000	136	92
\$50,000 - \$249,999	10	12
\$250,000 or more	15	11
	161	115
<u>Cropland Harvested</u>		
1-49 Acres	82	93
50-499 Acres	34	24
500+ Acres	9	6

Total	125	123
<u>Farms by Tenure</u>		
Full Owner	122	133
Part Owner	31	3
Tenant	8	5
Total	161	169
Farms w/ Operator Living on Farm	134	- -

Source: 2017 U. S. Census of Agriculture

1.2 PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION

N.J.S.A. 4:1C-43.1a states that *“there is established in the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) a farmland preservation planning incentive grant program, the purpose of which shall be to provide grants to eligible counties and municipalities for farmland preservation purposes. The statute further states that “to be eligible to apply for a grant, a ...municipality shall identify project areas of multiple farms that are reasonably contiguous and located in an agriculture development area authorized pursuant to the "Agriculture Retention and Development Act".*

Project Areas are further defined in the regulations for the municipal planning incentive grant program as follows:

An area identified by a municipality that identifies discrete areas within the municipality’s farmland preservation plan that constitute separate, significant areas of reasonably contiguous farmland that will promote the long-term viability of agriculture as an industry in the municipality, and which consists of the following lands and lands that are within one mile of any of the following lands:

- 1. Targeted farms located within an ADA;*
- 2. Lands from which an application for the sale of a development easement has been granted final approval by the municipality, county and/or the Committee pursuant to the Agriculture Retention and Development Act, as amended, and the Garden State Preservation Act;*
- 3. Lands from which development easements have already been purchased;*
- 4. Other land permanently deed-restricted for agricultural use;*
- 5. Lands enrolled in an eight-year farmland preservation program or municipally approved farmland preservation programs; and*
- 6. Other permanently preserved lands dedicated for open space purposes that are compatible with agriculture, as approved by the Committee.*

Salem County has established an agricultural development area that includes virtually all of Pilesgrove Township (see Section 4.2). The primary objective of the Pilesgrove Township farmland preservation program is to permanently preserve as much farmland as is feasible. This plan update replaces the four (4) Project Areas with a single Project Area that excludes commercial and industrial zoning districts, existing sewer service areas, and dedicated open space. The revised Project Area conforms to the relevant statutory criteria and is 17,990 acres (80% of the Township's total land area).

Map 2: Open Space and Conservation illustrates the Project Area in Pilesgrove Township.

The focus of the municipal program is to preserve contiguous agricultural areas throughout the Township. Therefore, acquisition efforts will focus on the farms adjacent to those that have previously been preserved as well as those that are in the path of development. **Map 2** also indicates the tracts that have been preserved and the tracts for which applications are currently pending for one of the farmland preservation programs.

1.3 IMPORTANT FARMLAND SOILS

Map 3: Important Farmland Soils indicates the important farmland soils in Pilesgrove Township based on the most current NRCS data. As Map 3 illustrates, the Township soils are primarily classified as Prime Soils or Soils of Statewide Importance. Prime Soils (18,242 acres) and Soils of Statewide Importance (4,036 acres) collectively account for 23.9 percent of all soils identified in the Township. Table 7 provides a summary inventory of Township soils.

SADC Prime Farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses. SADC Soils of Statewide Importance include those soils in the USDA Land Capability Class II and Class III that do not meet the criteria as SADC Prime Farmland Soils. The Soils of Statewide Importance If Drained can be capable of producing yields as high as statewide important soils when drained.

Nevertheless, the soils in the Township do have a number of characteristics that require modification to be the most productive. The presence of a slowly permeable substratum in much of the Township results in the need for and use of tile drains or similar devices. For this reason, a significant portion of the prime agricultural soils in the Township are also listed as hydric soils.

Table 7
Summary of Pilesgrove Soils

NRCS Soil Classification	Acreage	Percentage
Soils of Statewide Importance	4,036	4.3
Prime Farmland Soils	18,242	19.6
Soils of Statewide Importance, if Drained	54,905	58.9
Soils of Unique Importance	845	0.9
Soils of Local Importance	2,739	2.9
Not Prime Farmland Soils	12,524	13.4
Total	93,291	100.0

1.4 IRRIGATED ACRES AND AVAILABLE WATER SOURCES

Reliable data on the irrigated acreage in the Township is not readily available. The 2006 Farmland Assessment Act applications only reported 200 acres of irrigated acres, which is not an accurate representation of current activities.

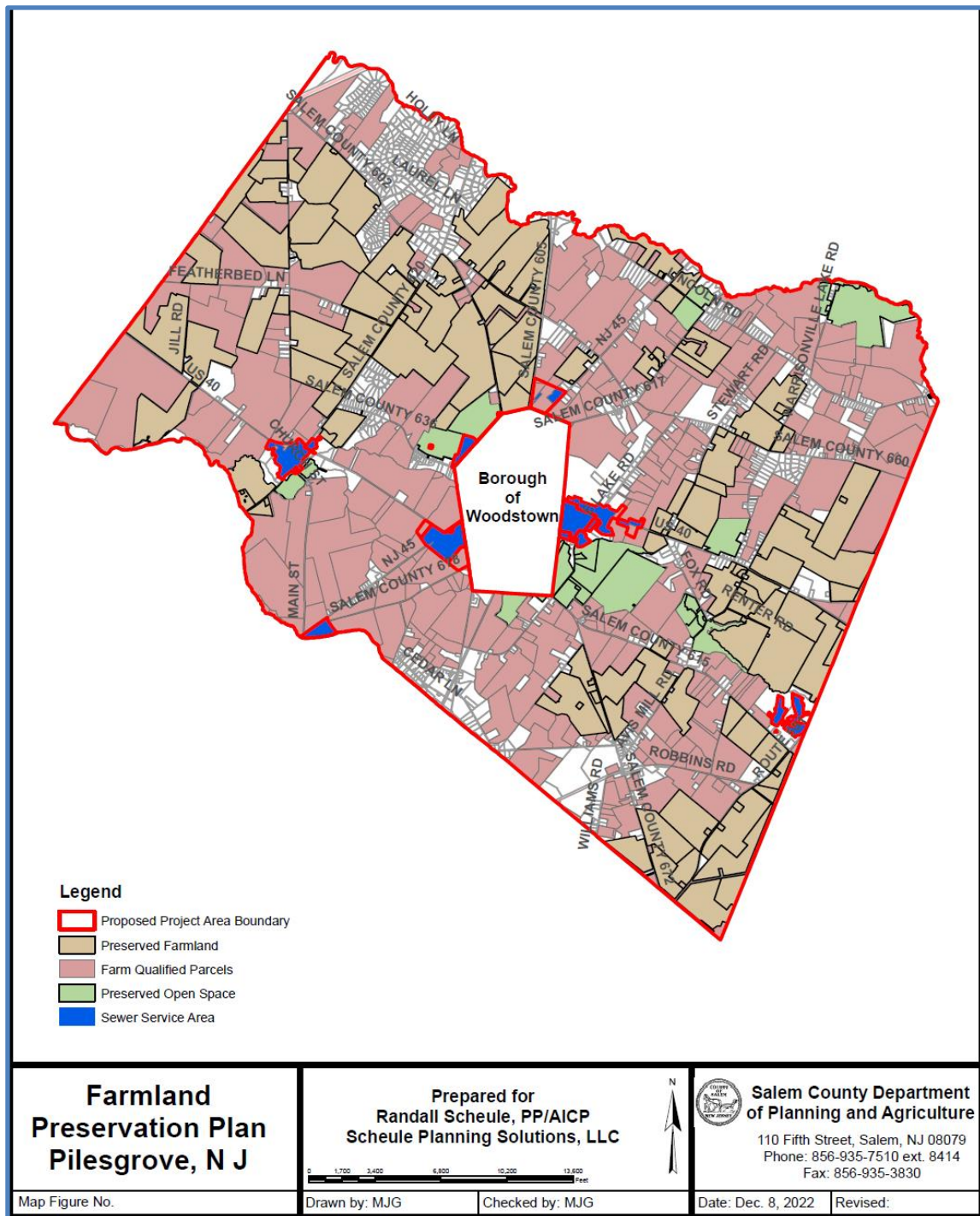
The Salem County Extension Office has reported that there are 16 agricultural certifications in Pilesgrove Township covering 40 water diversions (34 surface water; 4 wells). A review of the records indicates that these diversions provide for a maximum of 4,715 irrigable acres in the Township and a maximum withdrawal of 502.2 million gallons per month (MGM). It is evident from this data that the extent of the irrigation system in the Township is much greater than reported by other data sources.

The 2022 Salem County Farmland Preservation Plan indicates that the number of farms using irrigation in the County peaked in 1997 at 960, whereas the total number of irrigated acres peaked at over 19,000 acres in 2002. However, over the last 10 years, both the number of farms and the number of acres irrigated has remained relatively consistent. The Census shows that in 2017, the acres irrigated (17,142) reached its lowest point since 1997.

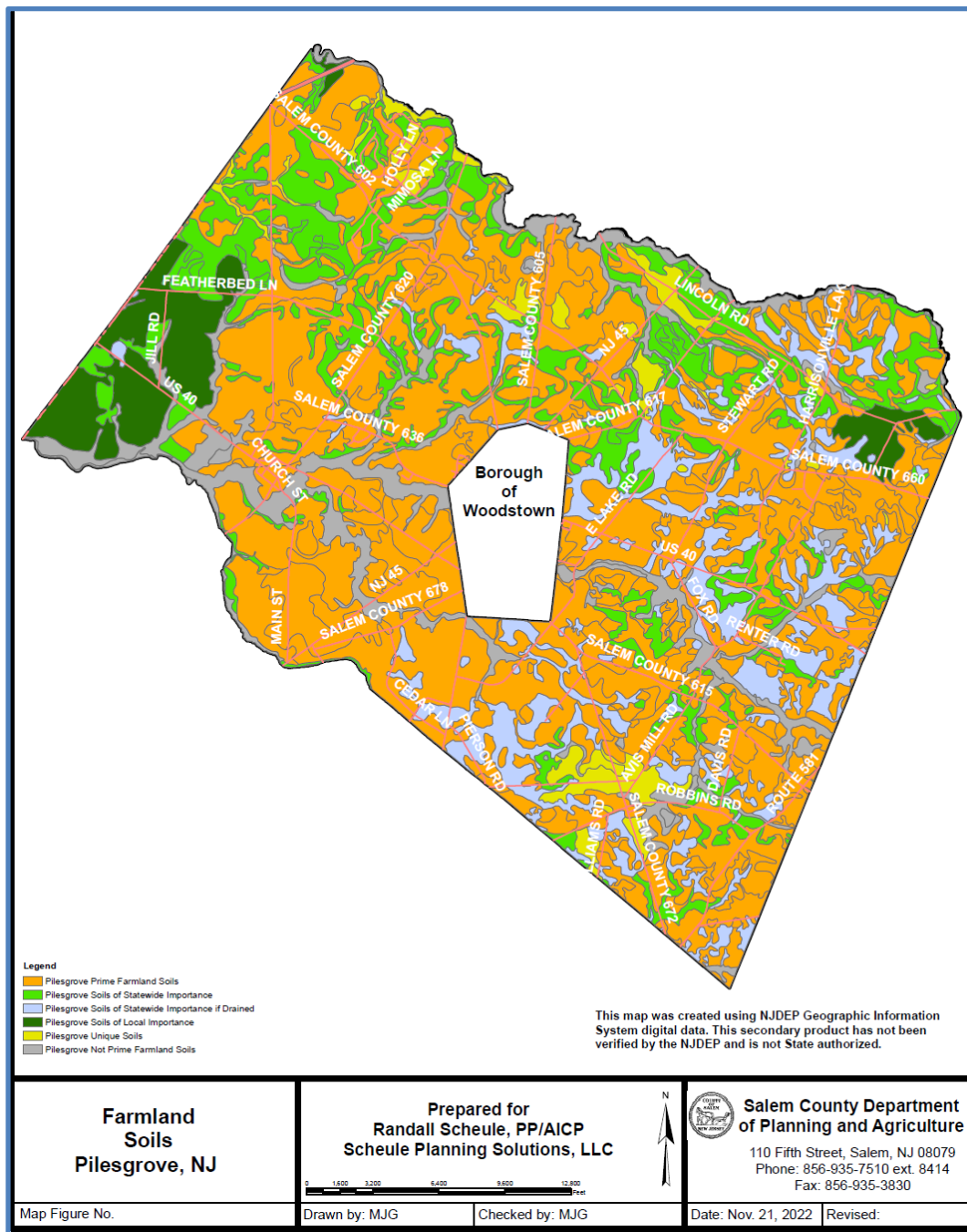
The available water sources are the groundwater aquifers of the Potomac-Raritan-Magothy, the Mount Laurel-Wenonah sands, and, to a lesser extent, the Vincentown formation. Surface water sources in the Township tend to be small irrigation ponds that have been constructed to provide for surface water diversions.

The availability of reliable water sources for irrigation is of critical concern in Pilesgrove Township due to the nature of the crops produced and the increasing need for irrigation to achieve high productivity. The limits of the underlying aquifers are becoming increasingly evident due to the drawdown in water levels and surface water diversions are limited by the watercourse flow rate.

Map 2 Open Space and Conservation



Map 3 Important Farmland Soils



1.5 FARMLAND HOLDINGS

1.5.1 Farm Parcel Size by Zoning District

The average size of a qualified farm parcel in Piles Grove Township is about 31 acres. A review of the qualified farmland assessment applications for the 2008 tax year resulted in the breakdown of farm size by zoning district shown in **Table 7-1**.

**Table 7-1
Farm Parcel Size by Zoning District**

Farm Parcels by Zoning District					Farm Parcel Size Breakdown						
Zoning District	Acres	Percent	Parcels	Average	0-9.9	10-24.9	25-49.9	50-99.9	100-149.9	150-199.9	200+
AR-1	6,890.8	41.9	121	56.9	26	19	25	26	15	7	3
AR-2	3,583.1	21.8	78	45.9	16	17	14	24	5	2	0
RR	3,085.0	18.8	128	24.1	53	41	19	9	5	1	0
SR	1,981.8	12.1	188	10.5	38	34	15	11	0	0	0
PRD	92.6	0.6	2	46.3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
VN	11.0	0.1	2	5.5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
HC	305.0	1.9	10	30.5	1	5	2	2	0	0	0
NC	18.2	0.1	2	9.1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
PLI	453.8	2.8	2	226.9	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
PPE	21.4	0.1	1	21.4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	16,442.7	100.0	534	30.8	137	108	77	72	26	10	4

The Agricultural Retention (AR) zoning districts are the districts that are most suited for agricultural production. As shown in **Table 7-1**, about 64% of the qualified farmland is in the two AR districts. The AR-1 and AR-2 zoning districts collectively contain about 64% The average qualified farmland parcel is about 51 acres .

The Restricted Residential (RR) zoning district generally consists of lands that have limitations for residential development such as an elevated seasonal high water table or a clayey substratum. Nevertheless, this zoning district contains a number of productive farms that have implemented means of overcoming the natural resource conditions. Over 3,000 acres or about 19% of the qualified farmland in the Township is located within this zoning district. The average parcel size in the RR district is approximately 24 acres.

The Single Family Residential (SR) zoning district is a low density residential zoning district located along the northern tier of the Township. The soils tend to be suited for agricultural production as well as land development. Almost 2,000 acres of the qualified farmland are located within this residential zoning district. However, the average lot size is only slightly above ten acres, which is indicative of subdivision activity and parcels slightly exceeding the minimum size to qualify for farmland assessment.

The Planned Residential District (PRD) refers to planned residential development zoning near the village of Sharptown that was the subject of affordable housing litigation that has been settled. The Highway Commercial (HC) and Neighborhood Commercial (NC) zoning districts contain only 323 acres of qualified farmland. These areas will likely be converted to commercial use, if demand warrants in the future.

Pilesgrove Township also has an overlay zone known as the Planned Light Industrial (PLI) zoning district that contains two large parcels totaling 442 acres. This zoning district may only be developed for planned industrial development if a General Development Plan (GDP) is approved by the Township and the State Plan is modified to allow the planned infrastructure needed to serve this nodal development.

The Pilesgrove Planning Board granted approval of a General Development Plan and Preliminary Major Subdivision for Block 45, Lots 1 and 7 on December 15, 2021. A planned industrial development including wholesale uses, distribution centers, warehousing and a wastewater treatment facility is proposed. Conditional final major site plan approvals were granted by the Planning Board for two warehouse facilities on July 20, 2022.

1.5.2 Target Farm Size

Pilesgrove Township's 2012 Farmland Preservation Plan listed 59 "target" farms encompassing about 4,011± acres for preservation in the four project areas. The average target farm in the 2012 Plan is 68 acres.

1.5.3 Preserved Land

As of 2012, all or portions of 37 farms have been preserved through the purchase of easements in Pilesgrove Township. The total preserved acreage in 2012 was 4,843 acres and the average size of the preserved farm was 131 acres. About 94% of the preserved land is in the designated Project Areas. As of September 2022, the number of preserved farms in the Township had increased to 65 involving 7,694 acres, with an average farm size of 118 acres.

1.5.4 Contiguous Land Holdings

A detailed review of the Township tax records was conducted in 2004 and indicated that the qualified farmland was owned by a total of 269 entities (families or LLCs) when land under common or similar ownership is combined. It was determined that about 65% of the farmland owners held less than 50 acres of land; an additional 24.5% owned between 50 and 150 acres; and the remaining 10.5% of the farmland owners hold in excess of 150 acres. At that time, there were only eight entities that had land holdings in excess of 300 acres in the Township. However, these major landholders controlled over 20% of the farmland in the Township and hold the key to the Township's future since their participation in a farmland preservation program can ensure the long-term availability of contiguous farmland.

1.6 AGRICULTURAL TRENDS

1.6.1 National

In the early 1950's there were approximately 5 million farms in the United States encompassing 1.2 billion acres of land. The average farm size was slightly less than 250 acres. By the year 2000, the number of farms in the United States had declined to 2.18 million or about 40% of that recorded 50 years earlier and the land devoted to farmland had declined to 0.94 billion acres or less than half of that recorded in 1950.

1.6.2 New Jersey

The pressures on the agricultural industry have been particularly evident in New Jersey which is the most urbanized state in the nation yet one blessed with productive soils and growing conditions. The trends in the state agricultural industry are as follows:

- Number of Farms. In 1950, there were 25,000 farms in New Jersey. In 2017, there were 9,883 farms, which represents a decline of 60% in the number of operating farms.
- Farmland. The land devoted to agriculture in 1950 was about 1.75 million acres or 37% of the entire State. In 2017 the Census reported 734,084 acres in farms or less than 18% of the State land area.
- Farm Size. In 2012 the average size of a farm in New Jersey was 79.81 acres which is actually more than the 70 acre average size in 1950 but less than the 124 acre average size in 1970. In 2012, about 78% of the farms in New Jersey were less than 100 acres, about 19% in the 100-200 acre range, and 2% in the 200-1000 acre size. Only 1% of the farms in New Jersey encompass more than 1,000 acres. In 2017, the average New Jersey Farm was 74 acres, with 75% of the farms being less than 50 acres. A mere 1.1% of New Jersey farms exceeded 1,000 acres in 2017.

1.6.3 Salem County

Because of its location in the southwestern corner of the state, Salem County has been somewhat removed from the land conversion pressures around the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Therefore, agriculture in Salem County has not changed as dramatically as the rest of New Jersey. Nevertheless, the agricultural industry in the County has been under increasing pressure for the following reasons:

- The industry has been subjected to the stringent regulatory climate that is indicative of an urbanized state,
- The conversion of land in the region as well as other factors has resulted in the loss of the food processors, equipment suppliers, and other key components of a once thriving agricultural industry;
- The extent of the conversion of land to non-agricultural uses in close proximity to Salem County has represented a constant diversion from the investment needed for a long term industry; and,
- The buckshot land development pattern in the County on large lots has resulted in the encroachment of non-agricultural uses within the

contiguous agricultural districts that are needed for efficient agricultural operations.

The 2002 Census reported an increase in the number of farms, the acreage devoted to farming, the market value of the agricultural products, the total and harvested cropland, and the irrigated land in Salem County from that reported in the 1997 Census. While there has been a long-term gradual decline in agriculture in Salem County, the 2002 Census data indicated a brief rebound in agricultural activity. Salem County had the fifth highest agricultural production value of all counties in New Jersey in 2002.

The 2017 Census indicates that total sales of agricultural products have more than doubled over the last 30 years, and that the County's agricultural sales rose 28.6 percent from \$79.9 million in 2007 to \$111.9 million in 2012. In 2017, sales in the County declined by nearly 10 percent to \$102.3 million. As of 2017, the average value of agricultural products sold in the County had also declined 3.6 percent to \$131,040 per farm.

The Salem County Farmland Preservation Plan (SCFPP) concludes that farm viability will be dependent upon maintaining existing markets and identifying and expanding into new markets. The SCFPP indicates that with commodity prices for certain products being based on regional or national production costs, yields, and demands, it is less profitable in New Jersey to produce those commodities. For that reason, farmers in this area need to look at improved marketing techniques for standard products, marketing of specialty products, and alternative sources of income. The SCFPP cites the opportunities for field crops for energy production as well as the opportunities offered by agritourism, and indicates that the County is in need of greater variety in agricultural services as a means to lessen farmer's dependence on mail order supplies.

1.6.4 Pilesgrove Township

According to tax assessment records for the 2008 tax year), Pilesgrove Township contained about 15,923 acres of qualified farmland under the Farmland Assessment Act, accounting for 70% of the Township's total land area. Tax assessment records for 2022 identify 16,165 acres of assessed farmland on 441 farms. Pilesgrove Township currently has a viable and diverse agricultural industry in close proximity to land being converted to alternate uses in southern Gloucester County.

According to the SADC, Pilesgrove Township had the second highest acreage of active farmland in the state of New Jersey based on 2004 farmland assessment data. More importantly, the three communities of Upper Pittsgrove, Pilesgrove and Mannington Townships have by far the highest concentration of active agricultural lands of any area in the State. These three communities continue to have over 48,000 acres of active farmland in a horseshoe pattern centered on Woodstown Borough.

According to the 2012 Plan Update, the trend in qualified farmland in Pilesgrove Township indicates that there had been some recent conversion of farmland to non-agricultural purposes due to the acquisition of land by speculators or developers not committed to continued agricultural production. As shown in **Table 2**, the qualified farmland for the 2008 tax year has declined by almost 8% from that of 2005. This change is indicative of the land conversion pressures that were affecting Pilesgrove Township at that time. The 2012 Plan opines that the decline would have been much greater if the recent housing slump did not deter investors. Data in Table 2 for 2018 indicates that the acreage of qualified farmland has increased by 760 acres over 2008 levels.

The unique land development pattern in the Township is susceptible to rapid change. The factors that are of particular concern are as follows:

- The increasing rate of ‘buckshot’ development within agricultural areas due to the desire of farmland owners to subdivide a small number of lots to enhance their business income;
- Continued concerns about the long term viability of the agricultural industry in New Jersey which impacts investment decisions;
- The increasing average age of farmers in the Township means that significant quantities of land that may become available for preservation or development in the short term future;
- The continued ownership of vast land holdings by a small number of families reiterates the potential for land conversion or preservation; and
- The recent increase in major subdivision activity and land values in the Township.

Pilesgrove Township is currently in a unique position. The Township has a viable and diverse agricultural industry in close proximity to the land being converted to alternate uses. Despite this proximity, the Township maintains expansive contiguous agricultural districts with limited non-agricultural intrusions. The 2012 Plan Update notes that in the last four years, the Township has witnessed the land speculation activities that are a pre-requisite for land development applications. It is readily apparent that Pilesgrove Township has a limited window of opportunity to preserve its farmland, its agricultural industry, and its rural/agricultural character.

1.6.5 Regional Context

Review of the active and preserved farmland in the region provides the context of the active and preserved farmland in Piles Grove Township. This review also confirms that Piles Grove, Mannington and Upper Pittsgrove Townships form an expansive area of active, contiguous farmland.

II. MUNICIPALITY'S AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

2.1 TRENDS IN MARKET VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SOLD

According to the Census of Agriculture, the market value of agricultural products in Salem County increased from \$737 per acre in 1997 to \$753 per acre in 2002, which represents a 2.2% over a five-year period. The per acre market value in 2017 was \$1,041, representing a 138% increase over 2002 values. However, total agricultural sales decreased by approximately \$9.6 million (-9.4%) between 2012 and 2017. (see *Table 5*).

There is limited information at the municipal level relating to the trend in the value of agricultural products sold. Farmers have reported high crop yields but lower prices in recent years. In order for the agricultural industry to be profitable, there is clearly a need for better marketing of the agricultural products generated by the region.

The rapid increase in fuel costs (2007-2008) has generally had a corresponding impact on crop prices. While the net effect of the current economic climate on agriculture is varied depending upon the industry sector, there is no question that the gross market value of agricultural products has increased substantially in recent years, as have the costs of production. It is believed that proximity to the market will be an increasingly important factor in the future due to the increasing costs of transportation.

2.2 CROP/PRODUCTION TRENDS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS

An analysis was conducted of the farmland assessment data to ascertain recent crop production trends. *Tables 8 to 11* summarize the relevant production data for field crops, livestock, vegetables, and nursery stock, which are the primary forms of agricultural production in Pilesgrove Township. The trends that are evident from this analysis are summarized below. Pilesgrove Township continues to have a unique and diverse agricultural industry with extensive acreage in field and vegetable crops, a substantial number of livestock, and an emerging nursery industry.

2.2.1 Field crops.

According to the farmland assessment data, the total acreage devoted to field crops in the Township increased from 9,805 acres in 1991 to 10,286 acres in 2001, declined to 9,598 acres in 2006, and increased to 9,674 in 2018 (see *Table 8*).

The substantive field crops in the Township (>500 acres) are corn for grain and silage, alfalfa hay, other hay, soybeans and wheat. While there has been some fluctuation in crop acreage, the acreage devoted to these field crops has remained reasonably consistent. The

largest recent decline in field crops in the Township between 2001 and 2006 was in the acreage devoted to soybeans (-28.5%) and wheat (-25.5%). Although wheat acreage has continued to decline, soybean acreage in 2018 was up 163% over 2006 levels.

Despite some decline, the Township continues to have 15.6% of the County's field crop acreage including 21.5% of the acreage devoted to barley, 18.5% of the acreage devoted to corn, 19.1% of the acreage devoted to alfalfa hay, 19.5% of acreage devoted to other hay, 45.7% of the acreage devoted to rye and 14.5% of the acreage devoted to soybeans. In 1991, Piles Grove Township had 19% of the field crop acreage in the County which declined to 15.5% over the intervening fifteen year period. In 2018, Piles Grove's share of the County's field crop acreage was 15.7%.

2.2.2 Vegetable Crops

Table 9 indicates the trend in vegetable crop acreage from 1991-2006 and 2018. Piles Grove Township represented 15.9% of the vegetable crop acreage in Salem County in 1991, 17.0% in 2001; 17.9% in 2006, and 12.0% in 2018. While the vegetable crop acreage in the Township has declined from 2,388 acres in 1991 to 1,916 acres in 2006 or about 20% during this period, the decline in the County vegetable crop acreage was almost 29% during the same period. In 2018, vegetable crop acreage in the County had increased 1.5%, while acreage in Piles Grove declined 32% from 2006.

The vegetable crops, which continue to be important in Piles Grove Township, include lima beans, peas, carrots, squash, sweet peppers and tomatoes. In 2006, over 100 acres was devoted to each of these crops, with the largest acreage devoted to squash, tomatoes, and sweet peppers. Piles Grove Township had 36.6% (NA) of the lima bean acreage; 63.8% (NA) of the carrot acreage; 35.3% (7.7%) of the sweet pepper acreage; 35.0% (20.9%) of the squash acreage; and 42.8% (45.8%) of the tomato acreage in Salem County in 2006 (values in parenthesis are 2018 percentages).

2.2.3 Livestock

Table 10 indicates the trend in the number of livestock in the Township and County. According to the data, Piles Grove accounted for over 50% of the livestock in the County in 1991, over 67% in 2001, over 82% in 2006, . This data should be clarified since it was influenced by the fact that until recently Piles Grove Township contained virtually all of the egg chickens in the County. In 2006, the total number of egg chickens in the Township approached 100,000 and represented over 98% of the chickens in Salem County. Since that time, the egg chicken business has collapsed in the Township with the bankruptcy and foreclosure of Red Bird farms.

Nevertheless, Pilesgrove Township also contains a large percentage of Salem County's livestock particularly in the categories of beef cattle, mature and young dairy cattle, and sheep. According to the farmland assessment data, Pilesgrove Township had 29.4% of the livestock in the County in 2006, excluding egg chickens. The presence of a strong cattle and dairy industry is particularly unique for New Jersey since these industries have largely disappeared in other parts of the State.

2.2.4 Nursery Crops

Table 11 indicates the trend in nursery crop acreage from 1991 to 2006 and 2018. In 1991, the nursery crop industry was insignificant in Pilesgrove Township and account for less than 50 acres of land. Since that time, there has been a substantial increase in the lands committed to cultivated sod. The cultivated sod acreage in the Township grew from 0 in 1991, to 400 acres in 2001, 861 acres in 2006, and 839 acres in 2018 accounting for 54.7% of the cultivated sod acreage, and 28.0% of the total nursery crop acreage in Salem County.

By comparison, the 2022 Salem County Farmland Preservation Plan indicates that the sale of crops, which includes field, nursery and greenhouse crops, far out-paced that of livestock and poultry consistently over the last 30 years, by an average of \$40.9 million per year. Since 2007, livestock and poultry sales have consistently decreased from \$19 million to \$11.9 million.

2.3 SUPPORT SERVICES WITHIN MARKET REGION

Pilesgrove Township has certain advantages due to its central location within the expansive agricultural area of Salem County. These advantages include the following:

- Weekly community farm market in Salem City;
- County fairgrounds along U.S. Route 40 in the Township;
- Local Supply store (Tractor Supply) and,
- Proximity to farm and equipment suppliers.

2.3.1 Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC)

The Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC) is located on East Commerce Street in the City of Bridgeton about twenty miles from Pilesgrove Township. This location was selected since it is in the heart of a vast agricultural area that has been severely tested by changes in the industry in recent years. The FIC is a unique business incubation and economic development accelerator program that is part of New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) at Rutgers. The objective of the Center is to provide

business and technology expertise to small and mid-sized food and value-added agriculture businesses in New Jersey.

The FIC provides a full range of services to its clients which include:

- *Farmers and Cooperatives* desiring to create new businesses based on value-added agricultural products or considering new markets for their existing commodities;
- *Startup Food Companies* coping with challenges such as financing, technology, regulations, market development and other infrastructure requirements;
- *Existing small and mid-sized food companies* seeking to access new technologies, upgrade quality assurance capabilities, enter new markets, and expand and improve their operations; and
- *Retail and Foodservice Establishments* seeking to improve their operations and purchase locally grown New Jersey products

The 23,000 square foot FIC South business incubator located in Bridgeton, NJ is an USDA and FDA inspected facility that houses shared-use food processing space for a broad array of products and processes, classroom with distance learning capabilities, focus group observation room, meeting room, client offices, product development kitchen, food microbiology and food chemistry labs, sensory testing, refrigerated, frozen and ambient storage. This facility specializes in product design, analysis, scale up and commercialization, food safety and regulatory compliance.

It is anticipated that the FIC will have a positive impact on the southern New Jersey agricultural economy as farmers and cooperatives seek market opportunities and advantages.

2.4 OTHER AGRICULTURAL RELATED INDUSTRIES

There are a number of agriculturally related industries within, or in close proximity to, Pilesgrove Township. Unlike other parts of New Jersey, the Salem County region has adequate agricultural support industries including, but are not limited to, the following:

- Trucking enterprises to transport grain and produce to market;
- Truck repair operations for repair of all types of agricultural vehicles;
- Warehousing operations including cold storage;

- Equipment supply companies (John Deere, Pole tavern; Farm Rite, Shiloh)
- Chemical supply companies; and,
- Farm supply stores.

The deficiencies in the region are with regard to markets rather than support industries. According to local farmers, there is a need for expanded direct marketing contracts associated with food processing industries or improved price competition from wholesale brokerage houses.

The SCCFPP states that *“agriculture is a major component of Salem County’s economic health and social fabric. While over time the economy of the County has grown to encompass other industries, farming has remained the cornerstone upon which the County developed”*.

The strength of the agricultural economy has a strong ripple effect due to the number of support industries that are directly impacted by changes in the level of agricultural activity or in the nature of that activity. This relationship is clearly evident in Pilesgrove Township, which does not have any other forms of substantive economic activity and employment.

According to the 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, 2.4% of the 2,137 employed individuals in Pilesgrove were engaged in ‘agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. The largest employment occupations in the Township were: educational services, and health care and social assistance (34.9%), retail trade (9.4%), manufacturing (7.5%), and professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (7.2%).

Table 8
Field Crop Acreage (1991-2018)

	Barley for Grain	Corn for Grain	Corn for Silage	Grass for Silage	Alfalfa Hay	Other Hay	Oats for Grain	Rye for Grain	Sorghum	Soybeans	Wheat	Other Field Crops	Total Field Crops
1991													
Pilesgrove	310	1,840	1,588	0	1,460	935	73	256	60	2,902	310	71	9,805
Salem County	1,866	8,995	3,728	0	5,427	3,942	111	1,524	1,441	23,686	3,652	246	54,618
Percent of County	16.6	20.5	42.6	0	26.9	23.7	65.8	16.8	4.2	12.3	8.5	28.9	18.0
2001													
Pilesgrove	146	1,981	1,982	0	1,150	1,260	12	126	196	2,696	737	0	10,286
Salem County	851	14,086	4,375	0	5,437	6,310	151	1,242	1,676	21,927	7,260	170	63,485
Percent of County	17.2	14.1	45.3	0	21.2	20.0	7.9	10.1	11.7	12.3	10.2	0	16.2
Change 1991-2001													
Pilesgrove	-164	141	394	0	-310	325	-61	-130	136	-206	427	-71	481
Percent Change	-52.9	7.7	24.8	NA	-21.2	34.8	-83.6	-50.8	226.7	-7.1	137.7	-100.0	4.9
Salem County	-1,015	5,091	647	0	10	2,368	40	-282	235	-1,759	3,608	-76	8,867
Percent Change	-54.4	56.6	17.4	NA	0.2	60.1	36.0	-18.5	16.3	-7.4	98.8	-30.9	16.2
2006													
Pilesgrove	196	1,844	1,737	0	1,248	1,348	0	106	140	2,395	549	35	9,598
Salem County	747	13,579	4,345	181	5,662	7,369	146	880	1,468	21,912	5,646	179	62,114
Percent of County	26.2	13.6	40.0	0	22.0	18.3	0	12.0	9.5	10.9	9.7	19.6	15.5
Change 2001-2006													
Pilesgrove	50	-137	-245	0	98	88	-12	-20	-56	-301	-188	35	-688
Percent Change	34.2	-6.9	-12.4	NA	8.5	7.0	-100.0	-15.9	-28.6	-11.2	-25.5	NA	-6.7
Salem County	-104	-507	-30	181	225	1,059	-5	-362	-208	-15	-1,614	9	-1,371
Percent Change	-12.2	-3.6	.07	NA	4.1	16.8	-3.3	-29.1	-12.4	-0.1	-22.2	5.3	-2.2

2018													
Pilesgrove	122	2,613	636	NA	601	1,374	NA	186	39	3,915	188	NA	9,674
Salem County	568	15,573	2,023	NA	3,138	7,056	34	407	1,080	27,086	3,998	116	61,779
Percent of County	21.5	16.8	31.4	NA	19.1	19.5	NA	45.7	3.6	14.5	4.7	NA	15.7
Change 2006-2018													
Pilesgrove	-74	769	-1,101	NA	-647	26	NA	80	-101	1,520	-361	NA	76
Percent Change	-37.8	41.7	-63.4	NA	-51.8	1.9	NA	75.5	-72.1	63.5	-65.8	NA	0.8
Salem County	-179	1,994	-232	NA	-2,524	-313	-112	-473	-388	5,174	-164.8	-63	-335
Percent Change	-23.9	14.7	-53.4	NA	-44.6	-4.2	-76.7	-53.8	-26.4	23.6	-29.2	-35.2	-0.5

Table 9
Vegetable Crop Acreage (1991-2018)

	Asparagus	Lima Beans	Snap Beans	Cabbage	Carrots	Sweet Corn	Cucumbers	Eggplant	Lettuce	Peas	Sweet Peppers	White Potatoes	
1991													
Pilesgrove	73	0	447	7	349	116	38	7	0	206	153	70	
Salem County	292	530	2,115	135	1,210	1,203	760	64	16	984	1,259	1,444	
Percent of County	25.0	0	17.8	5.2	28.8	9.6	5.0	10.9	0	20.9	12.2	7.8	
2001													
Pilesgrove	37	165	18	0	513	107	46	0	0	249	528	0	
Salem County	422	308	987	209	634	2,459	609	87	77	1,375	1,121	1,312	
Percent of County	8.8	53.6	1.8	0	80.9	4.4	7.6	0	0	18.1	47.1	0	
Change 1991 - 2001													
Pilesgrove	-36	165	-429	-7	164	-9	8	-7	0	43	375	-70	
Percent Change	-49.3	NA	-96.0	NA	47.0	-7.8	21.1	NA	NA	20.9	245.1	NA	
Salem County	130	-222	-1,528	74	-576	1,256	-151	23	61	391	-138	-132	

Percent Change	44.5	-41.9	-608	54.8	-47.6	104.4	-19.9	35.9	381.3	39.7	-11.0	-9.1	
2006													
Pilesgrove	40	185	20	12	233	24	142	18	5	121	294	0	
Salem County	400	506	630	132	365	1,020	768	140	63	980	833	978	
Percent of County	10.0	36.6	3.2	9.1	63.8	2.4	18.5	12.9	7.9	12.3	35.3	0	
Change 2001 - 2006													
Pilesgrove	3	20	2	12	-280	-83	96	18	5	-128	-234	0	
Percent Change	8.1	12.1	11.1	NA	-54.6	-77.6	208.7	NA	NA	-51.4	-44.3	NA	
Salem County	-22	198	-357	-77	-269	-1,439	159	53	-14	-395	-288	334	
Percent Change	-5.2	64.3	-36.2	-36.8	-42.4	-58.5	26.1	60.9	-18.2	-28.7	-25.7	-25.5	
2018													
Pilesgrove	94	0	20	8	0	309	114	11	0	178	97	0	
Salem County	533	149	103	192	5	2,032	1,243	67	55	409	1,263	1,020	
Percent of County	17.6	NA	19.4	4.2	NA	15.2	9.2	16.4	NA	4.4	7.7	NA	
Change 2006 - 2018													
Pilesgrove	54	-185	0	-4	-233	285	-28	-7	-5	57	-197	0	
Percent Change	135	-100	0	-33.3	-100	1,188	-19.7	-38.8	-100	47.1	-67.0	0	
Salem County	133	-357	-527	60	-360	1,012	475	-73	-8	-571	430	42	
Percent Change	33.3	-70.5	-83.6	45.5	-98.6	99.2	61.8	-52.1	-12.6	-58.3	51.6	4.3	

Table 9 (Continued)
Vegetable Crop Acreage (1991-2018)

	Sweet Potatoes	Pumpkins	Spinach	Squash	Tomatoes	Melons	Parsley	Beets	Broccoli	Greens	Mixed Vegetables	Total Vegetables	
1991													
Pilesgrove	0	0	20	152	554	129	0	0	0	0	67	922	
Salem County	102	81	658	987	1,573	306	32	6	31	0	809	4,585	
Percent of County	0	0	3.0	15.4	35.2	42.2	NA	NA	0	NA	8.3	20.1	
2001													
Pilesgrove	8	0	14	207	220	32	0	0	0	0	98	2,242	
Salem County	61	111	588	912	676	123	0	0	8	63	1,081	13,223	
Percent of County	13.1	0	2.4	22.7	32.5	26	NA	NA	0	0	9.1	17.0	
Change 1991 – 2001													
Pilesgrove	8	0	-6	55	-334	-97	0	0	0	0	31	1,320	
Percent Change	NA	NA	-30.0	36.2	-60.3	-75.2	NA	NA	NA	NA	46.3	143.2	
Salem County	-41	30	-70	-75	-897	-183	-32	-6	-23	63	272	8,638	
Percent Change	-40.2	37.0	-10.6	-7.6	-57.0	-59.8	NA	NA	-74.2	NA	33.6	188.4	
2006													
Pilesgrove	0	3	50	331	347	12	0	0	0	0	79	1,916	
Salem County	70	154	579	946	810	124	14	0	2	0	1,170	10,690	
Percent of County	0	1.9	8.6	35.0	42.8	9.7	0	NA	0	NA	6.8	17.9	
Change 2001 – 2006													
Pilesgrove	-8	3	36	124	127	-20	0	0	0	0	-19	-326	
Percent Change	-100.0	NA	257.1	59.9	57.7	-62.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	-19.4	-14.5	
Salem County	9	43	-9	34	134	1	14	0	-6	-63	89	-2,533	
Percent Change	14.8	38.7	-1.5	3.7	19.8	0.8	NA	NA	-75.0	-100.0	8.2	-19.2	

2018													
Pilesgrove	12	0	0	147	281	0	0	0	0	0	35	1,305	
Salem County	248	78	725	705	658	110	53	0	0	0	967	10,848	
Percent of County	8.3	0	0	20.8	42.7	0	0	0	0	0	3.6	1.2	
Change 2006 – 2018													
Pilesgrove	12	-3	-50	-184	-66	-12	0	0	0	0	-44	-611	
Percent Change	100.0	-100.0	-100.0	-55.6	-19.0	-100.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	-55.6	-31.9	
Salem County	178	-76	146	-241	-152	-14	39	0	0	0	-203	158	
Percent Change	254.3	-49.4	125.2	-25.2	-18.8	-11.3	378.6	0	0	0	-17.4	101.5	

Table 10
Livestock (1991-2018)

	Beef Cattle	Mature Dairy	Young Dairy	Equine	Sheep	Swine	Goats	Meat Chickens	Egg Chickens	Turkeys	Other Livestock	Total Livestock	
1991													
Pilesgrove	1,565	1,376	855	297	456	46	59	269	121,277	8	5	126,213	
Salem County	3,883	4,485	2,612	1,595	1,096	2,796	330	101,296	123,949	1,708	4,989	248,739	
Percent of County	40.3	30.7	32.7	18.6	41.6	1.6	17.9	0.3	97.8	0.5	0.1	50.7	
2001													
Pilesgrove	1,484	1,182	747	544	379	9	188	53	93,692	6	5,042	103,326	
Salem County	3,852	2,866	2,158	1,863	1,257	1,647	864	693	95,915	779	41,297	153,191	
Percent of County	38.5	41.2	34.6	29.2	30.2	0.5	21.8	7.6	97.7	0.8	12.2	67.4	
Change 1991 – 2001													
Pilesgrove	-81	-194	-108	247	-77	-37	129	-216	-27,585	-2	5,037	-22,887	
Percent Change	-5.2	-14.1	-12.6	-83.2	-16.9	-80.4	218.6	-80.3	-22.7	-25.0	727.7	-18.1	
Salem County	-31	-1,619	-454	268	161	-1,149	534	-100,603	-28,034	-929	36,308	-95,548	

Percent Change	-0.8	-36.1	-17.4	16.8	14.7	-41.1	161.8	-99.3	-22.6	-54.4	727.8	-38.4	
2006													
Pilesgrove	1,356	1,112	617	357	225	0	134	106	98,166	6	5,111	107,190	
Salem County	3,759	2,527	1,583	2,088	1,000	776	1,255	1,108	99,820	522	16,032	130,470	
Percent of County	36.1	44.0	39.0	17.1	22.5	0	10.7	9.6	98.3	1.1	31.9	82.2	
Change 2001 – 2006													
Pilesgrove	-128	-70	-130	-187	-154	-9	-54	53	4,474	0	69	3,864	
Percent Change	-8.6	-5.9	-17.4	-34.4	-40.6	-100.0	-28.7	-100.0	4.8	0	1.4	3.7	
Salem County	-93	-339	-575	225	-257	-871	391	415	3,905	-257	-25,265	-22,721	
Percent Change	-2.4	-11.8	-26.6	12.1	-20.4	-52.9	45.3	59.9	4.1	-33.0	-61.2	-14.8	
2018													
Pilesgrove	1,164	592	267	332	235	25	68	101	524	0	3,173	6,481	
Salem County	3,456	845	666	1,749	1,040	444	1,104	1,366	3,443	153	3,460	17,726	
Percent of County	33.7	70.1	40.1	18.9	22.6	5.6	6.2	7.4	15.2	0	91.8	36.6	
Change 2006 – 2018													
Pilesgrove	-192	-52	-35	-25	10	25	-66	-5	-97,642	-6	-1,938	-100,709	
Percent Change	-14.2	-46.7	-56.7	-7.0	4.4	NA	-49.3	-4.7	-99.5	-100.0	-37.9	-93.4	
Salem County	-30	-1,682	-917	339	400	332	-151	258	-96,377	-369	-12,572	-112,744	
Percent Change	-8.1	-66.6	-57.9	-16.2	4.0	-42.8	-12.0	23.3	-96.5	-70.1	-78.4	-86.4	

Table 11
Nursery Crop Acreage (1991-2018)

	Bedding Plants	Cut Flowers	Trees, Shrubs	Cultivated Sod	Christmas Trees	Other Ornamentals	Total Nursery
1991							
Pilesgrove	0	0	17	0	27	5	49
Salem County	95	5	936	412	250	9	1,707
Percent of County	0	0	1.8	0	10.8	5.6	2.9
2001							
Pilesgrove	0	0	25	400	25	2	452
Salem County	19	26	1,312	662	266	3	2,397
Percent of County	0	0	1.9	60.4	9.4	66.7	18.9
Change 1991 – 2001							
Pilesgrove	0	0	25	400	25	2	452
Percent Change	NA	NA	47.1	60.7	-7.4	-60.0	822.4
Salem County	119	26	1,321	662	266	3	2,397
Percent Change	25.3	420.0	41.1	60.7	6.4	-66.7	40.4
2006							
Pilesgrove	5	2	28	861	14	0	910
Salem County	61	27	1,614	1,686	362	1	3,751
Percent of County	8.2	7.4	1.7	51.1	3.9	0	24.3
Change 2001 – 2006							
Pilesgrove	5	2	3	461	-11	-2	458

Percent Change	NA	NA	12.0	115.3	-44.0	-100.0	101.3
Salem County	-58	1	293	1,024	96	-2	1,354
Percent Change	-48.7	3.8	22.2	154.7	36.1	-66.7	56.5
2018							
Pilesgrove	2	0	4	839	5	23	873
Salem County	59	0	1,273	1,533	177	61	3,116
Percent of County	3.4	NA	0.3	54.7	0.3	37.7	28.0
Change 2006 – 2018							
Pilesgrove	-3	-2	-24	-22	-9	23	-37
Percent Change	-60	-100.0	-85.7	-2.5	-64.3	NA	-40.6
Salem County	-2	-27	-341	-153	-185	60	-635
Percent Change	-3.2	-100.0	-21.1	-9.1	-51.1	6,000.0	16.9

III. LAND USE PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) is the state planning document for the state of New Jersey. The emphasis of the SDRP is to establish state land use planning policies that are implemented using a various means by regulatory agencies. In particular, decisions on various state permitting programs are strongly influenced by the SDRP policies.

3.1.1 Planning Areas

The SDRP separates the state into planning areas with most of the future growth directed into Planning Areas 1 and 2 and the least development directed to Planning Area 5. The State Plan is based on a center-based growth policy which means that growth in the suburban and rural areas of the state are directed into areas that are designated as centers where growth can, and should be, accommodated in deference to the rural Environs that should be protected.

3.1.2 State Plan Policy

Map 4 is the adopted ***State Development and Redevelopment Plan Map*** for Salem County. All of Pilesgrove Township is shown as a Rural Planning area designation with the exception of the extreme northeastern corner of the Township that is a Rural Planning Area/ Environmentally Sensitive Area (PA-4B). Rural Planning Areas are supportive of agriculture and other related economic development efforts that ensure diversity within New Jersey. The open lands of the Rural Planning Area include most of New Jersey's prime farmland, which has the greatest potential of sustaining continued agricultural activities in the future.

The following excerpt from the SDRP summarizes the planning policy with regard to farmland preservation in Planning Area 4:

In the major farming regions of New Jersey, adequate water resources and large, contiguous tracts of land with minimal land-use conflicts are essential to sustaining successful farming operations and farmland productivity. Acceptable agricultural management practices are utilized to protect prime, fertile soils, water and other natural resources. More intensive farming operations and the growing encroachment of housing into what were once considered the domain of crops and livestock have produced the need for "right-to-farm" and other agriculturally supportive ordinances necessary to ensure a future for the agricultural industry. Other tools that provide incentives to

Map 4
State Development and Redevelopment Plan



- Pilesgrove requested that the Woodstown Town Center be extended into the Township. This change would enable the Township to provide diverse housing opportunities, including affordable housing near the Town Center and to support more compact development patterns.

Clustering and transferring of development rights would be feasible with limited extensions of the planned infrastructure.

- Critical Environmental Sites should be established in the western part of the township to coincide with Natural Heritage Priority site designations. This area contains several critical habitats for listed species that deserve protection.
- An Agriculture/Industry node should be established in the extreme southwestern corner of the Township due to the unique location of this area. This node would have good access and would be at the interface of the County's growth corridor and agricultural heartland. Any development within this node would be planned industrial development under a General Development Plan that would serve the needs of the region including the market and transportation needs of the agricultural industry.
- Establish the village of Sharptown to the west of Woodstown as a designated village center.

The Office of Smart Growth (OSG) indicated that all of the requested changes were not appropriate for the cross-acceptance process but would be worthy of consideration during the Plan Endorsement process that would need to involve both the Borough and the Township.

3.1.4 Designated Centers and Endorsed Plans

Plan Endorsement is a process whereby the municipality seeks to have its local planning documents endorsed by the State Planning Commission as being compatible with the SDRP. The Plan Endorsement process enables the parties to discuss the differences between local and state planning objectives and to reconcile those differences in a Planning implementation Agreement (PIA).

Woodstown Borough's designated Town Center was set to expire on June 30, 2020. The center designation coincided with the Borough limit and can be reinstated through the plan endorsement process. Woodstown Borough is currently pursuing the Plan Endorsement process to have its center designation reinstated.

While Township planning objectives have changed somewhat since 2004, the designation of the Sharptown Village center, the extension of the Woodstown town center, and the designation of an Agriculture/Industry node remain important planning objectives of the Township that could enhance the community and support the agricultural industry.

3.2 CURRENT LAND USE AND TRENDS

3.2.1 Population Growth.

According to the U.S. Census, Pilesgrove Township had a 20% increase in population from 1990-2000. Based on growth patterns, population growth is expected to be about 23% from 2000-2010. The Township population was 4,016 in 2010, and 4,183 as of the 2020 United States Census. This represents an increase of 167 people, or 4.2%, from the 2010 census. The South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization projections indicate a 2040 population of 4,482 individuals in Pilesgrove representing a 12% increase between 2010 and 2040.

3.2.2 Building Permits.

According to the Department of Community Affairs, a total of 272 building permits have been issued from 2000 to 2006 in Pilesgrove Township compared to 1,747 building permits in Salem County. Therefore, during that period, Pilesgrove Township accounted for about 6% of the County's population, while accounting for more than 15% of the building permits issued in the County. Only two other communities, Pennsville Township and Pittsgrove Township had a greater number of building permits during this period.

From 2012 to 2020, fourteen new residential units were authorized by permit in Pilesgrove, which represents 3.4% of the total residential permits issued in Salem County for this period. In 2010, the Township population accounted for 6.1 of the County population; in 2020 the Township's share had increase to 6.5 percent of the County.

Table 12 and **Chart 2** indicate the pattern of building permits, demolition permits and certificate of occupancies from 1980 through 2021. The average number of building permits issued each year over this period is 18. Virtually all of these permits have been for single-family dwelling units. Significant exceptions to this trend are Friends Home assisted living project in 2004, and Bailey's Corner in 2009. The average number of permits from 2001 to 2005 was about 50, which was significantly higher than the long-term average. The downturn in 2006 and 2007 reflected a change in the regional housing market as well as the depletion of approved building lots in the Township. **Table 12** also indicates that occupancy certificates have basically followed the pattern as building permits with the lag for the construction activities. **Chart 2** clearly illustrates this pattern.

The number of residential demolition permits averaged only about one per year until the year 2000 and has averaged about 2 per year since then. The increase in the

number of demolitions reflects the fact that many of the recent developments have involved the removal or replacement of an existing dwelling.

3.2.3 Approved developments.

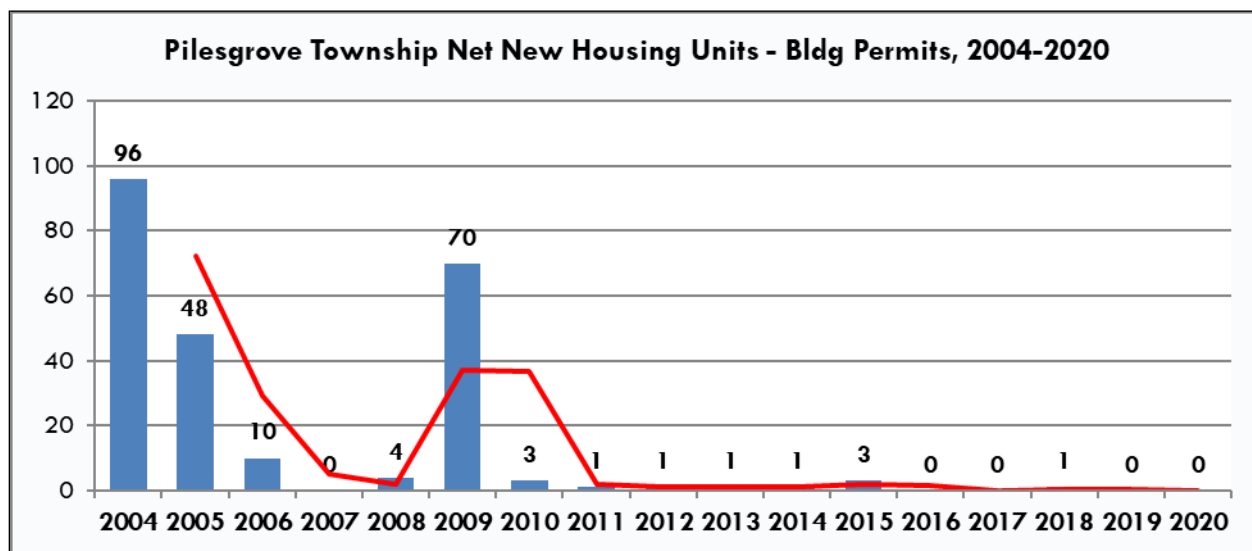
Table 13 indicates the status of the current major development applications in Pilesgrove Township. When all the major land developments listed in **Table 13** are developed, it would result in the construction of an additional 84 single-family detached units on large lots.

Table 12 <u>Building/Occupancy/Demolition Permits (1980-2020)</u>					
Year	Building Permits	Single-family Permits	Multi-family Permits	Occupancy Certificates	Demolition Permits
1980	9	9	0	NA	2
1981	9	9	0	NA	2
1982	6	6	0	NA	0
1983	10	10	0	NA	2
1984	70	70	0	NA	1
1985	20	20	0	NA	2
1986	27	27	0	NA	1
1987	30	30	0	NA	1
1988	32	32	0	NA	1
1989	24	24	0	NA	0
1990	23	23	0	NA	1
1991	15	15	0	12	0
1992	24	24	0	24	0
1993	19	19	0	19	0
1994	40	40	0	19	1
1995	27	27	0	35	1
1996	16	16	0	23	0
1997	13	13	0	25	2
1998	18	18	0	15	1
1999	9	9	0	8	5
2000	23	23	0	19	2
2001	30	30	0	17	3
2002	28	28	0	23	6
2003	33	33	0	22	3
2004	106	87	19	34	6
2005	52	52	0	79	4
2006	15	15	0	28	5
2007	2	2	0	8	1

2008	9	9	0	9	4
2009	78	3	75	5	8
2010	3	3	0	82	0
2011	2	2	0	0	1
2012	4	4	0	4	2
2013	2	2	0	2	1
2014	3	3	0	2	2
2015	4	4	0	1	1
2016	0	0	0	3	0
2017	0	0	0	2	0
2018	1	1	0	1	0
2019	0	0	0	0	0
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	773	679	94	521	72

Source: NJ Department of Community Affairs Construction Reporter

Chart 2
Net New Housing Units (2004-2020)



Source: NJ Department of Community Affairs

3.3 SEWER SERVICE AREAS; PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY SERVICE AREAS

3.3.1 Existing Infrastructure

The only sewer service areas in Pilesgrove Township are those that have been included in the Woodstown Sewerage Authority Wastewater Management Plan. The

Township's municipally sponsored affordable housing project will be located on the only vacant parcel within the existing Sewer Service Area. The only public water supply in the Township is from the Woodstown Borough water system and tends to replicate the areas where sanitary sewers are provided.

3.3.2. Wastewater Management Planning

Except for individual sites exceeding a discharge of 2,000 gpd, and limited connections to Woodstown's system, all improved properties in Pilesgrove utilize on-site septic systems to manage wastewater. If and when wastewater management facilities become available, such sewer infrastructure could support the proposed Agriculture/Industry node; compact development adjacent to Woodstown as a result of the clustering of development rights from lands that will be preserved.

3.3.3. Individual Subsurface Disposal Systems

In addition to the initiative for limited extension of the water and sewer facilities from Woodstown Borough, there is also a need to implement effective management practices with regard to Individual Subsurface Disposal Systems (ISSDS). NJDEP wastewater management regulations require municipalities to implement a program to ensure proper O&M of existing systems. Moreover, future ISSDS will need to conform to stringent nitrate dilution requirements. One issue that is critical to growth control is the use of alternative treatment units (ATUs). The use of ATUs in conjunction with other growth control mechanisms can help achieve more compact and flexible land development patterns than conventional systems and thereby help implement clustering initiatives.

Table 13		
Status of Major Residential Developments		
Development Name	Number of Residential Lots	Status
Friends Home/Village	0	Complete and occupied
Woods at Laurel Hills	2	Approved; built-out
Gemberling	4	Approved; built-out
Cotler-Pierson	4	Approved; built-out
Gaskill-Pierson	2	Approved; built-out
Freas	0	Approved; built-out
Oldmans Bluff	21	Approved subdivision
Westwood Knolls	18	Approved; built-out
Auburn Estates	11	Conditional final approval
Pilesgrove Estates	67	Conditional final approval
Redstone Estates	6	Approved; built-out
Lincoln Mill Estates	18	Conditional final approval
Bailey Corner	74	Conditional preliminary approval

Affordable Housing		
Lincoln Mill Estates (south)	22	Complete application

3.4 MUNICIPAL MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS - OVERVIEW

3.4.1 Local Commitment

The Pilesgrove Township Committee and Township Planning Board are committed to the development and implementation of an effective farmland preservation program as part of its overall land use planning program. This Farmland Preservation Plan Update will be an integral element of the Township Master Plan. The Township is committed to retaining its rural/agricultural character while still allowing residential development within designated areas and while satisfying its affordable housing objectives.

The Township's adopted Land Use Plan contains the following objectives with regard to the agricultural economy:

- *The Land Use Plan should recognize the importance of agriculture to both the history and the future of Pilesgrove Township. Agricultural enterprises have utilized the valuable soil resources to produce crops, livestock, and other products necessary for the local economy. Agricultural enterprises have been an important procurer of goods and services relating to equipment and materials needed for farming. The benefits of agriculture include the retention of vast land holdings which could otherwise have been developed; the protection of the environment; and the creation of a unique rural landscape.*
- *The Township Planning Board should actively support the retention of agricultural operations by among other things, supporting the acquisition of development rights on important agricultural lands; the establishment of right-to-farm provisions; the creation of agricultural district of adequate size to ensure economic viability and land use compatibility.*
- *A Farmland Preservation Element that addresses the specific needs of agriculture identifies properties, which have been acquired, and presents a coherent long-term plan for agricultural retention and development should be developed and implemented.*

3.4.2 Zoning

The zoning power in New Jersey is typically used as a method of reducing the land conversion pressure without acquiring the land or the development rights outright. Large minimum lot sizes are often used in Agricultural or Rural Residential districts to

However, the primary disadvantage of large lot zoning is that residential developments that do occur consume more land than is necessary for residential purposes. In addition, if minimum lot sizes are excessive, the development value of the agricultural land can be impacted. Rural communities usually want to reduce the potential for land development without reducing the value of the farmer's land equity. For that reason, easement acquisition or the clustering of planned development are preferred methods of preserving land.

Map 5 Pilesgrove Zoning Map



The current minimum lot sizes in the Township are within a rather narrow range due to the absence of planned infrastructure to support smaller lot sizes and a concern that the use of larger minimum lot sizes will result in more land conversion and may impact land development values. The current lot sizes by district are as follows:

- Village Neighborhood (VN) District: ½-acre
- Single family residential (SR) District: 1 acre
- Agricultural Retention (AR) Districts: 2 acres; 3 acres along collector roads
- Restricted Residential (RR) District: 2 acres; 3 acres along collector roads

Pilesgrove Township has a separate Conservation Zoning District that includes suspected and identified wetlands in the Township. Lands within this zoning district cannot be used to achieve the minimum lot sizes in the development within agricultural retention districts.

3.4.3 Innovative Planning Techniques

Pilesgrove Township is attempting to balance the public desire to preserve contiguous tracts of agricultural land with the desire of farmland owners to maximize the value of their land equity. As noted above, the Township is currently pursuing discussions with the Borough of Woodstown that would result in the extension of planned infrastructure into Pilesgrove Township to support a non-contiguous clustering strategy. This approach is intended to supplement the easement acquisition program by achieving substantial land preservation through development incentives. The clustering of development rights for planned development will be structured to couple an aggressive farmland preservation program with a mechanism that fairly compensates the farm landowner for the development rights.

3.4.3.1 Clustering

Pilesgrove Township has had an Agricultural Retention Cluster option in the AR zoning district of its zoning ordinance since the mid-1990's. In simplistic terms, the cluster option allows a developer of a tract of at least 100 acres in size to reduce the minimum lot size from two acres to one acre provided that 50% of the gross acreage is preserved as farmland.

Because of the large minimum tract size, there have not been any applications under this provision. However, there are three current applications that utilize the cluster concept on a smaller tract size in the 50-75 acre range. In each of these cases, a variance has been granted from the minimum tract threshold. The reasoning behind the 100 acre tract minimum is that the preserved land would be at least 50 acres, which is

considered a viable farm. The cluster developments that have been tentatively approved on smaller tracts by the Planning Board have had conditions relating to the smaller preserved tract size. In one case, the applicant agreed to convey the preserved lands to the Township so that the lands could be conveyed with restrictions to another farmer using an equitable process.

3.4.3.2 AR District Residential Cluster General Development Plans (GDP)

In 2005, Pilesgrove Township adopted a provision to enable a developer of a residential cluster planned development involving one or more parcels in the AR district to submit a General Development Plan (GDP) provided that at least one of the tracts was greater than 100 acres in size. In order for the residential cluster GDP to be approved, the applicant would need to demonstrate that at least 50 acres of contiguous productive farmland and at least 40% of the gross acreage would be preserved as a result of the GDP approval. The GDP option was utilized by one applicant for a major residential development application involving two adjacent tracts known as the Point Airy Place GDP. The application was subsequently denied by the Planning Board due to the unwillingness of the developer to provide effective perimeter buffers.

3.4.3.3 Conservation Design

The term “conservation design” refers to a development process in which more flexible development regulations are utilized to conserve the key natural attributes of the development site. Pilesgrove Township obtained a grant from ANJEC to analyze the feasibility of implementing such an ordinance in 2002. Conservation design provisions adopted by Ordinance 09-09 in October 2009 are codified in Section 145-42.1 of the Land Use Code. The zoning ordinance encourages developments of twelve or more acres to follow the conservation/cluster design process. Based on this limited application, the Township may then consider extending its use to all development applications. The advantage of such a technique from a farmland preservation perspective is that the flexible development regulations should result in a more compact development pattern and the preservation of important agricultural areas.

3.4.3.4 Non-Contiguous Clustering

The non-contiguous clustering alternative is based on the so-called Ogden amendment of the MLUL that allows the clustering of planned development on non-contiguous parcels. The difference from TDR is that the lands being developed and preserved must be controlled by the same entity. The proposal is to set aside about 300 acres adjacent to Woodstown for the extension of the town center. This area would be developed at a density commensurate with existing development in the Borough if the

development rights are clustered from other lands under the developer's control within the AR district.

The advantages of non-contiguous clustering are that it avoids many of the difficult issues associated with TDR. Nevertheless, both clustering and TDR require planned infrastructure to support the higher densities necessary for the clustered area or in the case of TDR, the receiving district. The only public water and sewer available within Pilesgrove are the prior extension of the Woodstown Borough and WSA systems that have been extended into the Township.

In the absence of an inter-municipal agreement, the only alternative would be for the Township to develop its own water and sewer facilities in conjunction with developers or to allow the current sprawl pattern to continue unabated. The Township does not anticipate that the NJDEP will grant the approvals necessary to develop its own infrastructure, and is therefore not presently pursuing this option. Unfortunately, the major public investment that has been made into Pilesgrove for farmland preservation needs to be coupled with a viable means of growth control in the near future.

The 2022 Salem County Farmland Plan notes that to date, no municipalities within the County have implemented a noncontiguous cluster provision in their local ordinance, and that well water/septic systems may be able to accommodate single-family homes on one-acre lots, which would concentrate development in a specified area, while preserving a larger tract that could continue to be used for agricultural operations.

3.4.3.5 Transfer of Development Rights

There has been discussion about implementing a regional TDR program in Salem County. The Township would be supporting of such a program if effectively implemented but there are numerous potential pitfalls. For example, TDR requires extensive and expansive studies to be undertaken. These studies would need to be undertaken by the County and would require substantial public investment. There is no indication that the County is prepared to undertake these studies in the short term.

The re-allocation of development rights across municipal boundaries means that the affordable housing obligations associated with the development would also be transferred. The receiving municipalities may not support the concept when the scope of the development rights transfer and the associated affordable housing is recognized.

The development pressures being experienced in Pilesgrove Township will not be abated by this regional concept since the receiving municipalities along the County growth corridor do not have the same characteristics as Pilesgrove Township. Developers

are interested in the Woodstown-Pilesgrove area due to the character of the area, the school system, and other amenities. Non-contiguous clustering or a similar localized growth control mechanisms would have the potential of directing the growth in a different manner. Growth control into an entirely different area that does not have the same attributes may not be successful and will likely result in a continuation of current sprawl patterns.

In the event that the County does develop a successful TDR program in a reasonable time frame, the Township's non-contiguous clustering program could be eliminated or modified. However, the Township believes that it needs to pursue a localized program until or unless the county program does not come to fruition.

3.4.4 Description of Agricultural Buffer Requirements

The Pilesgrove Township Farmland Preservation Plan adopted in 2004 recommended that the Township adopt an effective agricultural buffer requirement. Since that time, the Land Development Ordinance has been amended to stipulate that all land development applications within the AR district must implement an agricultural buffer around the proposed development. The width of the buffer specified in the Ordinance is 150 feet but that can be reduced to 75 feet, at the Planning Board's discretion, if landscaped berms that function as an effective visual and dust barrier are implemented.

The buffer requirement was further clarified in 2006 to indicate that it is to be applied on all sides of the proposed development including along existing frontage roads. The agricultural buffer requirement was the primary basis of a legal challenge by a developer that had its GDP application denied because it did not conform to the agricultural buffer requirement. While the lawsuit was subsequently dropped, the agricultural buffer requirement will continue to be an important issue wherever land development applications are pursued in the Agricultural Retention (AR) zoning districts.

3.4.5 Development Pressures and Land Value Trends

3.4.5.1 Land Value Trends

Table 14 summarizes the sales of large land tracts in the Township and development easement acquisitions from 2015-2022. The average easement acquisition cost during this period was approximately \$7,200 per acre.

The 2022 County Plan Update indicates that the cost of preserving land has fluctuated since the first farm was preserved in 1991 which had an average cost per acre

of \$1,840. Between 1991 and 2000, the average cost per acre rose to \$2,247 in 1992, and decreased to \$1,136 per acre in 1996, which is the lowest average cost per acre for a fiscal year in the preservation program's history

3.4.5.2 Easement Values

Chart 3 indicate the value of easements acquired from 1990 through 2022. The Chart illustrates that there was a dramatic fluctuations in purchase prices for the easements that were acquired between 2005 and 2012. These increases are indicative of a change in land values during this time.

3.4.5.3 Land Development Patterns

Most of the land development activity is taking place along the northern tier of the Township, particularly in the northwestern corner where in-fill development is occurring. It should be noted that three of the land development applications in this quadrant of the Township involve cluster developments in which farmland will be preserved.

Two development projects that involve higher density housing are located adjacent to Woodstown since they are connected to the water and sewer system. Another development project that was the subject of Mount Laurel litigation, known as the Kings Road project, will require the development of its own water and sewer system. The status of that project is unknown.

3.5. MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL TDR OPPORTUNITIES

Currently, there are no municipal or regional TDR opportunities available to Pilesgrove Township. The Township does not currently have the planned infrastructure that is capable of serving as a receiving district. However, the initiatives being pursued to implement non-contiguous clustering would also enable the implementation of a TDR program.

While there has been general discussion about the concept of a regional TDR program at the County level, no substantive actions have been undertaken by the County Planning Board or any other entity to pursue this interesting concept. The implementation of a regional TDR program is an ambitious undertaking that will require a strong County planning initiative.

The 2022 County Plan indicates that since the release of a report entitled "Assessing the Potential for a Regional Transfer of Development Rights Program in

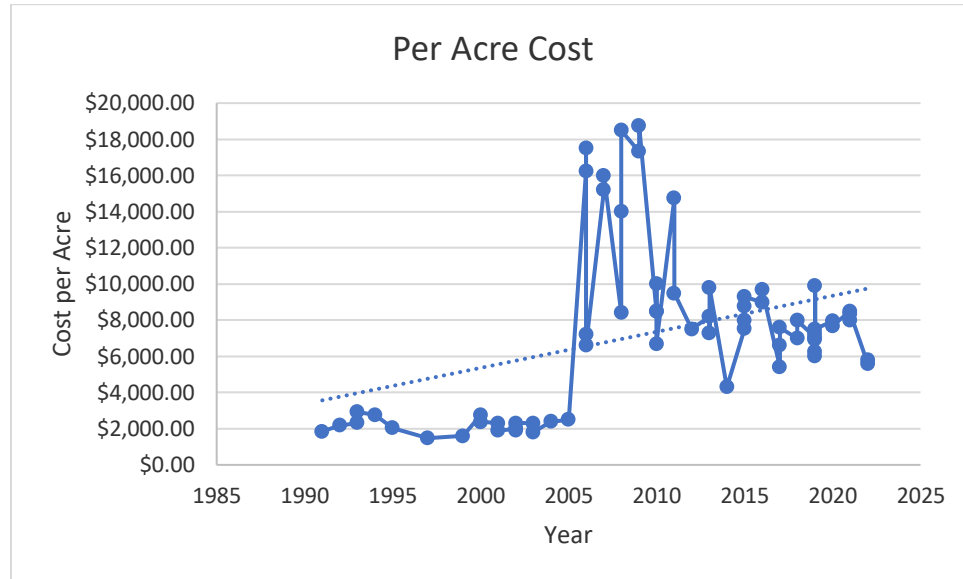
Salem County” in 2011, there has not been any additional studies conducted or interest from potential partners related to TDR.

Table 14
Recent Development Easement Acquisitions (2015-2022)

Owner/Grantor	Block, Lot	Fiscal Year	Grantee	Easement Acres	Total Easement Cost	Easement Cost/Acre
Kenneth S. & Wayne K. Wentzell	B 79 L 2; B 81 L 5	2015	SADC	105.95	\$799,748.85	\$7,548.50
NJCF/Sorbello Estate	B 28 L 3.07	2015	Nonprofit	43.38	\$381,145.60	\$8,785.40
NJCF/Perozzi, Lisa	B 80 L 10	2015	Nonprofit	71.03	\$568,804.14	\$8,007.94
Ruth A. Peters	B 91 L 19.01	2015	Municipal PIG	37.02	\$344,286.00	\$9,300.00
Robbins, Benjamin Jr. & John	B 86 L 2	2016	Municipal PIG	72.62	\$652,559.30	\$8,986.07
Thomas & Gary Fitton	B 91 L 19, 20	2016	Municipal PIG	50.06	\$485,591.70	\$9,700.00
Moffett, James & Patricia (Moffett farm)	B 43 L 5	2017	County PIG	46.03	\$10,908.00	\$5,400.00
Catherine Licciardello Trustee	B 10 L 1; B 12 L 1; B 9 L 3, 3.04	2017	SADC	121.67	\$805,165.80	\$6,617.40
NJCF/Timchal	B 15 L 2	2017	Nonprofit	75.24	\$571,831.60	\$7,600.00
Byrnes, Edward & Barbara (Lot 2)	B 22 L 2	2018	Municipal PIG	46.83	\$327,824.00	\$7,000.00
Ostrum, Gordon J., Jr.	B 26 L 1.01	2018	Municipal PIG	31.63	\$252,481.19	\$7,981.32
Atanasio, Philip R.	B 22 L 2.03	2019	Municipal PIG	39.08	\$275,151.36	\$7,040.00
Harris, Howard Grant & Elizabeth	B 25 L 1.09	2019	County PIG	79.3	\$495,612.50	\$6,250.00
Kelly, Dennis J., Sr. (E & D Farm)	B 24 L 3	2019	County PIG	83.92	\$609,280.98	\$7,260.00
Sorbello, Frank & Thomas	B 8 L 15.01	2019	County PIG	94.4	\$566,388.00	\$6,000.00
Wentzell, Wayne & Marlene	B 41 L 5	2019	Municipal PIG	33.81	\$234,282.51	\$6,930.00
Westwood Knolls Associates Inc. (Ostrum, Gordon J. Jr.) (NJCF)	B 26 L 2.09	2019	Nonprofit	44.03	\$435,838.10	\$9,897.76
William K Stoms Trustee of the William K. Stoms Revocable Trust	B 24 L 5.03	2019	Municipal PIG	16.02	\$120,135.00	\$7,500.00
Schaeffer, David L.	B 22 L 10	2020	County PIG	80.69	\$641,445.75	\$7,950.00
Wentzell, Kenneth S.	B 40 L 20	2020	Nonprofit	21.02	\$161,330.40	\$7,676.19
Leone, Joseph & Nancy	B 27 L 2	2021	Municipal PIG	58.7	\$498,907.50	\$8,500.00
Maccarone, Venerando M.	B 21 L 7; B 22 L 1.03	2021	Municipal PIG	41.59	\$332,752.00	\$8,000.00
Morda, Mary Louise	B 21 L 6	2021	County PIG	84.23	\$703,295.45	\$8,350.00
Kelly et al (Powers)	B 22 L 12; B 24 L 2	2022	SADC	156.33	\$874,539.60	\$5,594.26
Kelly et al (Sharp)	B 21 L 11	2022	SADC	116.85	\$677,730.00	\$5,800.00
TOTALS				1,651.43	\$11,827,035.33	\$189,674.84

Chart 3

Development Easement Acquisition Costs (1991-2022)



IV. MUNICIPAL FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

4.1 FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program, established in 1983, has been instrumental in protecting agricultural land from development, with over 250,000 acres preserved to date. This program, administered by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), allows landowners to sell their development rights, ensuring the land remains available for farming in perpetuity. The [Agriculture Retention and Development Act](#), which created the Farmland Preservation Program, and the [Right to Farm Act](#), were signed into law on January 26, 1983.

The Statewide Farmland Preservation Formula adopted April 7, 2025, offers landowners another value to choose from when seeking to protect their farm. Because farmland has value beyond what the market can capture, the Statewide Formula enhances payment based on the agricultural and natural resource characteristics of the property and is used by the SADC to determine the value of farmland for preservation purposes. It's an alternative to the traditional appraisal method and considers factors like soil quality, size, proximity to preserved land, and natural resources. The formula is intended to provide landowners with a fair and competitive offer when selling their development rights for farmland preservation.

As shown in **Table 15**, almost 250,000 acres have been permanently preserved in the State of New Jersey under easement purchase or fee simple acquisition programs. This acreage represents 34% of the land in the State in farms. Salem County has the second highest number of preserved farms and the highest amount of preserved land of the 21 counties in New Jersey. A total of 396 farms encompassing 42,694 acres have been preserved in the County as of November 20, 2022.

Table 15
Agricultural Lands Preserved by County

County	Farms	Percent	Acres	Percent
Atlantic	48	2.0%	5,105	2.1%
Bergen	8	0.3%	335	0.1%
Burlington	242	8.6%	29,228	11.8%
Camden	14	0.5%	1,011	0.4%
Cape May	51	1.8%	3,141	1.3%
Cumberland	234	8.3%	22,160	8.9%
Gloucester	221	7.8%	16,049	6.5%
Hunterdon	462	16.5%	35,797	14.5%
Mercer	117	4.2%	8,557	3.5%
Middlesex	55	1.9%	4,880	1.9%
Monmouth	213	7.6%	15,600	6.3%
Morris	116	4.1%	7,349	2.9%
Ocean	48	1.7%	3,249	1.3%
Passaic	2	0.0%	56	0.0%
Salem	396	14.1%	42,694	17.2%
Somerset	112	3.9%	8,261	3.3%
Sussex	161	5.7%	16,959	6.8%
Warren	310	11.0%	27,412	11.0%
Total	2,810	100.0%	247,854	100.0%

Source: SADC as of November 22, 2022

4.1.1 Salem County Farmland Preservation

As **Table 16** indicates, Pilesgrove Township has the third highest acreage of preserved farmland by municipality in Salem County. When farms that have received final approval for preservation are included, Pilesgrove Township accounts for almost 17% of the preserved land in the County and 2.5% of the preserved land in the entire State.

As of January 2023, 64% of the qualified farmland in Pilesgrove Township has been preserved or approved for preservation. The goal of the Township Farmland Preservation Plan is to preserve 75% of the qualified farmland in the Township within the next ten years (by 2033) through various State, county, and Township preservation programs.

Table 16
Salem County
Agricultural Lands Preserved by Municipality

Municipality	Preserved Acres	Percent
Alloway Township	6,794.5	11.8 %
Carney's Point Township	1,224.3	2.1%
Elmer Borough	12.1	0.0
Elsinboro Township	2,078.7	3.6%
Lower Alloways Creek Township	3,152.8	5.5%
Mannington Township	10,562.1	18.3%
Oldmans Township	553.8	0.9%
Pilesgrove Township	10,386.9	16.9%
Pittsgrove Township	4,919.5	8.5%
Quinton Township	4,099.8	7.1%
Upper Pittsgrove Township	13,773.8	23.8%
Total (Salem County)	57,852.1	100.0%

Source: SADC as of January 6, 2023

4.2 COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AREA

4.2.1 Definition

The term “Agricultural Development Area” or ADA is meant to refer to the area where agriculture is the preferred, but not the exclusive, use of land. It is within the ADA that the Project Areas and Target Farms are defined that comprise the County and municipal farmland preservation program. The term is referred to in both the underlying statute and the SADC regulations. The Statutory Reference (N.J.S.A. 4:1C:18) is as follows:

4:1C-18. Agricultural development area; recommendation and approval

The board may, after public hearing, identify and recommend an area as an agricultural development area, which recommendation shall be forwarded to the county planning board. The board shall document where agriculture

shall be the preferred, but not necessarily the exclusive, use of land if that area:

- a. Encompasses productive agricultural lands which are currently in production or have a strong potential for future production in agriculture and in which agriculture is a permitted use under the current municipal zoning ordinance or in which agriculture is permitted as a nonconforming use;*
- b. Is reasonably free of suburban and conflicting commercial development;*
- c. Comprises not greater than 90% of the agricultural land mass of the county;*
- d. Incorporates any other characteristics deemed appropriate by the board.*

The Regulatory Reference (N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.2) is as follows:

“Agricultural Development Area” (“ADA”) means an area identified by a county agriculture development board pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 4:1C-18 and certified by the State Agriculture Development Committee.

4.2.2 County Criteria

Salem County has adopted the following criteria in the development of its ADA:

- The ADA must consist of a minimum of 500 acres of contiguous qualified farmland;
- The soils within the ADA should be of Class I or II as designated by the USDA;
- The ADA should be no closer than 500 feet to existing accessible sewer lines.
- Borough, Town or city land shall not be eligible for inclusion, with the exception of Woodstown and Elmer Boroughs.

- Land that has received final approval for non-agricultural use is excluded;

Salem County has also established the following exceptions to these criteria:

- If there is a significant cluster of commercial farms that have been excluded from the ADA, the criteria that excluded these lands may be waived so that the land may be included within the ADA.
- If the soils on a farm are exceptional productive for agriculture and the farm has been excluded from the ADA based on other criteria, some of those criteria may be waived so that the farmland may be included.
- If landowners meet the eligibility requirements for an agricultural district but were excluded from the ADA, these owners may request reconsideration for inclusion.

As part of the County's 2022 Farmland Preservation Plan update, the County ADA boundary was amended to encompass a portion of Oldmans Township to the south/east of I-295. In addition, portions of the County where there is existing sewer service or adjacent areas identified as having proposed sewer service areas have also been excluded from the ADA. The ADA encompasses more than two-thirds of the County's total area (approximately 155,400 acres) and includes the majority of the County's agricultural landscape. The ADA encompasses all of Pilesgrove Township except for the sewer service areas adjoining Woodstown Borough (see Map 2).

4.3 FARMLAND PRESERVED TO DATE BY PROGRAM

Table 17 identifies all of the farms and parcels totaling 7,694 acres that have been acquired or otherwise deed restricted in the Township for agricultural purposes by various land preservation programs.

4.3.1 SADC Fee Simple Acquisition Program

The SADC fee simple acquisition program involves the outright acquisition of farmland for farmland preservation purposes. When farms are purchased outright, the SADC will sell them at public auction as preserved farms without any development rights.

The fee simple program is only used to preserve priority farms that meet or exceed the County average in size and quality score. In Salem County, the minimum acreage for priority farms is 94 acres, and 69 acres for alternate farms. Typically, the fee simple program is used to acquire farms that are particularly valuable to the County and for

which the landowner has no interest in continuing to farm the land. Farms are purchased outright for a variety of reasons, including the institution of foreclosure.

The fee simple program resulted in the preservation of 465 acres in 1990 for the initial farmland preservation project in the Township. This program has not been subsequently used within Pilesgrove Township.

4.3.2 SADC Direct Easement Purchase Program

The SADC direct easement program involves the acquisition of development rights by the State for farmland preservation purposes. While the County or municipality may be involved in this program, the lead in the direct easement purchase process is the SADC.

As with the fee simple program, the SADC direct easement program is only used to preserve priority farms that meet or exceed the County average in size and quality score. The minimum acreage for this program in Salem County is 94 acres for priority farms, and 69 acres for alternate farms. Typically, the direct easement program is used to acquire farms that are particularly valuable to the County and for which the landowner remains interested in continuing to farm the land.

As shown in **Table 17**, the SADC direct easement program has resulted in the preservation of twenty-one (21) farms totaling 2,516.40 acres in Pilesgrove Township between 2001 and 2024. The average size of preserved farms under this program is 120 acres.

Table 17
Pilesgrove Township Preserved Farms

<u>Owner</u>	<u>Municipal Block Lot</u>	<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Cost</u>
County Easement Purchase				
Clovervale, Dairy	B 26 L 3; B 27 L 3, 4, 5, 6	1992	409.87	\$891,228.80
Mosley, D. & B.	B 81 L 11, 12	1993	110.72	\$256,125.60
Paulding, Harry & Claire	B 81 L 4	1993	207.30	\$607,425.00
Pettit, E. & V.	B 26 L 6; B 27 L 7	1994	61.85	\$171,164.00
Waddington, Mildred	B 43 L 7	1995	204.60	\$415,390.11
Prickett, D. & I.	B 90 L 13	1997	167.68	\$83,224.52
Dubois, H. & J. & Estate	B 22 L 3, 7	1999	276.80	\$337,648.00
Catalano, Anna	B 21 L 3, 4	2000	234.03	\$643,582.50
Sickler, Ray & Sally	B 43 L 16; B 81 L 8	2000	319.50	\$47,844.96
Miller, Theodore	B 40 L 14; B 41 L 1, 4	2001	194.77	\$447,971.00
Ware, Irvin C. & Jill D.	B 81 L 3.01	2002	27.36	\$62,918.80
Williams, Allen G.	B 92 L 2	2006	100.94	\$659,145.60
Williams, Lee & Georgia H.	B 92 L 1	2006	113.89	\$271,326.00
Myers, Elizabeth C.	B 43 L 9	2008	70.83	\$594,980.40
Myers, Harrison	B 87 L 2, 3	2008	105.45	\$1,476,258.00
County Easement Purchase Subtotals:			2,605.59	\$6,966,233.29
County PIG				
Sickler Brothers Estate	B 92 L 5	2012	140.7	\$7,275.00
Moffett, James & Patricia (Moffett farm)	B 43 L 5	2017	46.03	\$10,908.00
Harris, Howard Grant & Elizabeth	B 25 L 1.09	2019	79.3	\$495,612.50
Kelly, Dennis J., Sr. (E & D Farm)	B 24 L 3	2019	83.92	\$609,280.98
Sorbello, Frank & Thomas	B 8 L 15.01	2019	94.4	\$566,388.00
Schaeffer, David L.	B 22 L 10	2020	80.69	\$641,445.75
Morda, Mary Louise	B 21 L 6	2021	84.23	\$703,295.45
County PIG Subtotals:			609.27	\$3,034,205.68

SADC Fee Simple				
	B 21 L 12; B 25 L 3, 5, 8; B 26 L 2			
Harris, Howard A./The Nature Conservancy		1991	465.34	\$857,059.40
SADC Fee Simple Subtotals:			465.34	\$891,228.80
SADC Easement Purchase				
Waddington, Janet F.	B 43 L 6	2001	33.85	\$64,318.80
Goforth, Albert D. & Jean M.	B 76 L 1; B 84 L 3	2002	107.37	\$214,740.00
Seayrs, Paul E. & Kimberly	B 76 L 3; B 84 L 7	2002	49.07	\$93,225.40
Clark, Robert K. & Lise A.	B 41 L 3.02	2003	22.26	\$51,198.00
Harker, Ronald & Charlene	B 91 L 18	2003	91.41	\$164,529.00
DiGregorio, Robert	B 45 L 2	2004	113.10	\$271,447.20
	B 79 L 32; B 84 L 4, 6; B 86 L 7, 8	2005	92.15	\$230,377.50
Sickler, R., F., J. (Avis Mill Rd)	B 8 L 5, 7	2006	198.70	\$3,227,224.00
Tomarchio & Castellini	B 23 L 3; B 24 L 8	2006	259.89	\$4,548,127.50
Vincent Sasso & Richard Delea	B 12 L 3; B 45 L 6, 6.01; B 61 L 2	2007	103.46	\$1,543,629.16
DiGregorio, John	B 91 L 22	2010	106.42	\$904,544.50
Hitchner, Gary & Shirley (II)	B 88 L 1, 2	2010	277.74	\$1,127,066.00
Hitchner, Gary & Shirley III	B 88 L 3	2010	127.32	\$1,273,220.00
Hitchner, Gary & Shirley IV	B 43 L 15; B 81 L 6, 7	2010	172.50	\$922,258.25
Milton & Margery Eachus	B 8 L 8	2011	135.13	\$1,281,331.50
Kelly, William & Elizabeth #5	B 76 L 4	2014	125.23	\$538,476.10
Vinciguerra, John & Sheri	B 79 L 2; B 81 L 5	2015	105.95	\$799,748.85
Kenneth S. & Wayne K. Wentzell	B 10 L 1; B 12 L 1; B 9 L 3, 3.04	2017	121.67	\$805,165.80
Catherine Licciardello Trustee	B 22 L 12; B 24 L 2	2022	156.33	\$874,539.60
Kelly et al (Powers)	B 21 L 11	2022	116.85	\$677,730.00
Kelly et al (Sharp)	B 11 L 5	2023	77.56	\$426,662.50
Patten, Virginia	B 14 L 6; B 39 L 15	2024	71.11	\$391,132.50
Verechia, Carol L.				
SADC Easement Purchase Subtotals:			2,516.40	\$19,612,897.16

Non-Profit PIG				
NJCF/Musumeci	B 15 L 10; B 19 L 5	2009	101.63	\$1,905,506.25
NJCF/Caltabiano, Mario & Catherine	B 14 L 6.01, 6.03	2007	84.83	\$1,357,328.00
D&R Greenway/Waddington/Richman's Ice Cream	B 29 L 12	2013	54.25	\$395,185.50
NJCF/Sorbello Estate	B 28 L 3.07	2015	43.38	\$381,145.60
NJCF\Perozzi, Lisa	B 80 L 10	2015	71.03	\$568,804.14
NJCF\Timchal	B 15 L 2	2017	75.24	\$571,831.60
Westwood Knolls Associates Inc. (Ostrum, Gordon J. Jr.) (NJCF)	B 26 L 2.09	2019	44.03	\$435,838.10
Wentzell, Kenneth S.	B 40 L 20	2020	21.02	\$161,330.40
Non-Profit PIG Subtotals:			495.41	\$5,776,969.59
Municipal PIG				
Ostrum, Gordon J. & Sharon E.	B 21 L 6.02; B 26 L 1	2008	140.26	\$2,594,865.50
Byrnes, Edward & Barbara	B 21 L 10, 9	2009	219.75	\$3,806,420.40
Edward & Andrea Mulligan	B 12 L 7.04	2011	32.04	\$472,255.50
Charlotte Lippincott / Charles Hurff	B 43 L 2	2013	152.83	\$1,253,238.80
Williams, George & Evelyn #1	B 87 L 1	2013	29.72	\$291,246.20
Ruth A. Peters	B 91 L 19.01	2015	37.02	\$344,286.00
Robbins, Benjamin Jr. & John	B 86 L 2	2016	72.62	\$652,559.30
Thomas & Gary Fitton	B 91 L 19, 20	2016	50.06	\$485,591.70
Byrnes, Edward & Barbara (Lot 2)	B 22 L 2	2018	46.83	\$327,824.00
Ostrum, Gordon J., Jr.	B 26 L 1.01	2018	31.63	\$252,481.19
Atanasio, Philip R.	B 22 L 2.03	2019	39.08	\$275,151.36
Wentzell, Wayne & Marlene	B 41 L 5	2019	33.81	\$234,282.51
William K Stoms Trustee of the William K. Stoms Revocable Trust	B 24 L 5.03	2019	16.02	\$120,135.00
Leone, Joseph & Nancy	B 27 L 2	2021	58.70	\$498,907.50
Maccarone, Venerando M.	B 21 L 7; B 22 L 1.03	2021	41.59	\$332,752.00
Municipal PIG Subtotals:			1,001.96	\$11,941,996.96
Grand Totals:			7,693.97	\$85,288,691.60

4.3.3 County Easement Purchase (EP) program

The County Easement Purchase (EP) program is often referred to as the “traditional” County farmland preservation grant program since it is the grant program that has been used by most counties from the outset of the State’s farmland preservation program.

Under this program, farmland owners sell their development rights to their County but retain land ownership. The development easements are purchased under a cost-sharing arrangement between the SADC and the County. The cost-sharing arrangement varies depending upon the cost of the easement but typically, the SADC is responsible for 60% of the easement cost and the County is responsible for the remaining 40%. In Salem County, the municipality is responsible for at least 1% of the easement cost as a local share. Pilesgrove and Upper Pittsgrove Townships elected to pay 2% of the easement cost several years ago to provide an added incentive for applications within their communities.

The County Easement Purchase (EP) Program resulted in the preservation of about 2,600 acres over a 16-year period (1992-2008) in Pilesgrove Township. A total of 16 farms, or portions thereof, were preserved under this program. The County EP program has now been phased out in favor of the County Planning Incentive Grant program, which has added flexibility and clearer planning objectives.

4.3.4 County Planning Incentive Program

The County Planning Incentive Grant Program is the successor to the traditional County EP program. As with the EP program, the County acquires development easements from interested farmland owners under a cost-sharing arrangement with the SADC. The cost-sharing varies depending upon the certified value of the development easement but typically the SADC is responsible for 60% of the cost and the County is responsible for the remaining 40%.

The differences between the EP and PIG programs are significant. The emphasis in the Planning Incentive Grant program is to define project areas of reasonably contiguous farmland where the County intends to focus its farmland preservation program. The planning process is more clearly defined and the priorities more clearly focused. The emphasis is to focus public investment in the areas that warrant that investment. The Project Areas are included in County Farmland Preservation Plan that becomes a part of the County Master Plan. SADC requires county farm plans to be adopted as an element of the county master plan if the county wishes to use the grant to complete the plan itself. Otherwise, adoption into the county plan is not required.

Furthermore, the acquisition process is different from the EP program. Minimum eligibility criteria have been adopted by the SADC that establish eligibility for the Planning Incentive Grant program.

The SADC adopted new regulations in 2007 that established more extensive requirements for the County Planning Incentive Grant applications. These regulations require the preparation of a County comprehensive farmland preservation plan that conforms to specific technical guidance.

As of January 2021, Salem County has preserved seven farms totaling 609.3 acres in Pilesgrove Township under the County PIG program.

The County's 2022 Plan Update indicates that for the fiscal year 2022, Salem County received the maximum grant permitted from the SADC in a funding cycle, a total of \$2 million dollars, for its farmland preservation activities, and that as of January 2021, the CPIG program has approved 45 applications, preserving 3,725.5 acres of farmland.

4.3.5 Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Program

The Municipal Planning Incentive Grant program is very similar to the County Planning incentive grant program but at the municipal level. Under this program, the municipality acquires development easements under a cost-sharing arrangement with the State and County. To be eligible for this program, municipalities must have an agricultural advisory committee that meets at least twice annually, a Right to Farm ordinance, a dedicated tax for farmland preservation (or have established a reliable source of dedicated funding and must have adopted a Farmland Preservation Plan as an element of the municipal master plan) and SADC standards as required by the Municipal Planning Incentive Grant program. The Farmland Preservation Plan is to establish Project Areas (where the land preservation program is to be focused in coordination with its overall land use plan), establish eligibility and ranking criteria, and outline an implementation strategy, including a financial plan.

The cost-sharing arrangement varies depending upon the certified value of the development easement using a sliding scale but typically the SADC is responsible for 60% of the cost and the county and municipality are responsible for the remaining 40% local share. Salem County and Pilesgrove Township have agreed to split the local share equally after all grants from other entities are deducted. One of the obvious advantages of the municipal Planning Incentive Grant program from the county's perspective is that the cost of the County's share is one-half of what it would be under the County Planning Incentive Grant program.

The SADC adopted new regulations in 2007 that established more extensive requirements for the municipal planning incentive grant applications. These regulations require the preparation of a comprehensive farmland preservation plan that conforms to specific technical guidance. This 2023 Plan update is being prepared in accordance with those regulations.

Pilesgrove Township applied for, and secured, its first Planning Incentive Grant in early 2004. Shortly thereafter, the Township solicited applications from all of the target farm landowners. A total of four (4) individual applications were received and pursued under Phase I. Phase II of the program resulted in the SADC approval of the preservation of two additional farms from 2010 to 2012. As shown in **Table 17**, the Township Planning Incentive Grant Program has resulted in the preservation of sixty-eight farms (or portions thereof) totaling 7,963.9. acres. In addition, one farm preserved under the direct easement program was initially under the Township Planning incentive grant program.

Table 18
Pilesgrove Township Planning Incentive Grant - Pending Applications

Applicant	Block/Lot	Acres
Chris & Melissa Williams	80/11	14.19
Bruce & Ann Marie Hardman	73/11	29.4
Aileen Reilly & Jeremy Chandler	74/3	22.5
Aileen Reilly & Jeremy Chandler	79/12	22.3
Richard Miller & Abner Glick	78/30	43.0
Benjamin Patten	11/3	85
Total		216.39

4.3.7 Non-Profit Program

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) provides grants to nonprofit organizations to fund up to 50 percent of the fee simple or development easement values on farms to ensure their permanent preservation. These properties often involve environmental and/or recreational significance in addition to their agricultural importance.

The Township has entered into an arrangement with the NJCF for land preservation projects within Pilesgrove Township. To date, the NJCF has preserved six

farms or portions thereof totaling 420 acres in Pilesgrove Township. The D&R Greenway Land Trust provided funding to preserve the 54.3-acre Waddington-Richman farm in 2013.

4.3.8 Term Farmland Preservation Program

Under this program, farmers agree to voluntarily restrict non-agricultural development for a period of eight or sixteen years in order to be eligible for certain benefits that may include grants that fund up to 50% of the cost of approved soil and water conservation projects.

There are two types of eight-year programs, municipally approved and non-municipally approved programs. Under the municipal program, a formal agreement is entered into by the landowner, the County, and the municipality. Under the non-municipally approved program, the agreement is with the landowner and the County. The advantage of the municipal program is that participants enjoy greater protection from nuisance complaints, emergency fuel rationing, zoning changes and eminent domain actions.

An owner cannot withdraw from the program except in extraordinary circumstances and only with the prior approval of the county. In addition, owners that want to sell their farm while enrolled in the 8-year program must provide the SADC with an executed agreement of sale, which the SADC can match. One farm in Pilesgrove Township was preserved under this procedure when the owners sought to sell their land to developers only to have the offer matched by the SADC.

This voluntary program has the potential to be more effectively linked with the farmland preservation program. The linking of this program with the future farmland preservation program is discussed in Chapter V.

4.3.9 Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

Pilesgrove Township does not have a TDR program due to the absence of planned infrastructure in the Township for the receiving area. The Township has been working with the Borough of Woodstown to enable limited planned infrastructure to be extended into Pilesgrove Township for the purpose of implementing either non-contiguous clustering of planned development or TDR.

4.3.10 Other programs and partnerships

4.3.10.1 Clustering.

Pilesgrove Township does encourage clustering on smaller lots, where appropriate, to preserve farmland. The Township has approved two residential developments that will preserve over 80 acres of farmland under a cluster arrangement. Both of these subdivisions involved unique circumstances that enabled the use of clustering.

4.3.10.2 Conservation Design

Pilesgrove Township has adopted a Conservation Design Ordinance to enable land developers to preserve open space and farmland as common open space in conjunction with residential subdivision development.

4.3.10.3 NJCF Funding Arrangement

Pilesgrove Township has entered into an innovative funding arrangement with the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) whereby the NJCF made available Federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) funds that had been allocated to the Foundation to reduce the Township's local share commitment on its Planning Incentive Grant applications in return for Township local share contributions for the NJCF Planning Incentive Grant applications. The result of this funding relationship is a leveraging of the local funds available from both entities. This arrangement results in the State using its own FRPP funds for at least two applications instead of SADC grant funds. The SADC agreed to allocate some of the savings from this unique cooperative funding arrangement to the County and Township since these funds could not be returned to the PIG grant account during this grant transition period.

4.4 CONSISTENCY WITH SADC STRATEGIC TARGETING PROJECT

The SADC issued a Strategic Targeting Project Preliminary Report in March of 2003 in conjunction with the County Agricultural Development Boards (CADBs). The project had three main goals to coordinate farmland preservation/agricultural retention efforts with proactive planning initiatives; to create/update the maps used to target land preservation efforts; and to coordinate farmland preservation efforts with open space, recreation and historic preservation investments. These goals are realized through protection of large areas of reasonably contiguous farmland that will promote the long-term economic viability of the agriculture industry through the Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) program.

The strategic targeting of farmland for preservation is intended to avoid conflicts with other types of infrastructure investments such as highway and wastewater expansions. The Strategic Targeting Project seeks to target farmland with high-quality soils outside of areas slated for growth by state and local planning efforts. The Preliminary Report indicated that the Strategic Targeting Project would be incorporated as a key component of the Department of Agriculture's Smart Growth Plan and would be periodically updated to maintain its effectiveness in strategically prioritizing farmland preservation investments.

To be eligible for the municipal PIG program, a municipality must establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee, maintain a dedicated source of funding for farmland preservation, establish a farmland preservation plan element, and adopt a right-to-farm ordinance. Pilesgrove Township has satisfied all four requirements for the municipal PIG program.

4.4.1 Agricultural Soils

One of the key components of the Strategic Targeting Project is to preserve the lands that have the best combination of characteristics to economically produce sustained high yields of agricultural crops. The Targeting Project emphasizes the importance of protecting these natural resources. The target farms designated in this Plan encompass acres of high soil productivity with over 80% of the soils classified as important farmland soils (prime soils, soils of statewide importance, or unique soils).

4.4.2 Agricultural Land Use

Agricultural land use in the State of New Jersey has continued to decline in acreage and change in character. The Census of Agriculture data shows a consistent decline in the acreage devoted to agricultural production as well as a change in the nature of agricultural land use to activities that are unrelated to high yield food production.

The Pilesgrove Township Farmland Preservation Plan is seeking to sustain viable agricultural land use within contiguous districts. The intent is to maintain land economic conditions that are suited for long-term high yield agricultural production. This Farmland Preservation Plan Update has demonstrated the continued strength and diversity of the agricultural economy in Pilesgrove Township but has also demonstrated the presence of land conversion pressures. For these reasons, the primary objective of the Pilesgrove Township Farmland Preservation Plan Update is to preserve a viable agricultural industry within contiguous districts; it is not intended to protect isolated farms within a developed area where substantial public investments have already been made for growth. The Department's Smart Growth Plan will be most effective if the funds

needed for easement acquisition are focused in the most viable agricultural area, which is the primary objective of this Plan Update.

4.4.3 Sewer Service Areas

The Strategic Targeting Project indicates that extensive agricultural lands in the State are within existing or future sewer service areas. The preservation of lands within sewer service areas can create a conflict in public investments. The preservation of land in proximity to existing sanitary sewers or within proposed sewer service areas would both reduce the value of the public investment in the sewer system and would increase the cost of easement acquisition since the development value is enhanced by inclusion in the SSA.

In this regard, none of the lands slated for easement acquisition in the Piles Grove Township Farmland Preservation plan Update are within existing or future sewer service areas. The implementation of this Plan Update would substantially increase the acreage of important farmland soils within preserved farms outside of sewer service areas.

4.4.4 Farmland Preservation Priorities

The Strategic Targeting Plan indicates that Prime and Statewide soils in agricultural use outside of sewer service areas should be the highest priority for farmland preservation investments followed by farmland comprised of Other Soils outside of sewer service areas. A majority of the designated Township Project Area has a high density of agricultural use on soils of federal (prime) or statewide significance outside of areas designated for existing or future sewer service. Therefore, the Piles Grove Township Farmland Preservation Plan Update is fully consistent with the Strategic Targeting Project.

It should be noted that an expansive area of soils along the Township's western boundary has been included in the Project Area due to the presence of productive agricultural operations even though the soils in this area are classified as soils of local importance or unimportance. If this area were not included, the overall soil productivity ratings for the target farms would increase. This area is unique due to the expansive acreage currently held by one family and the fact that the light (sandy) soils can be very productive with careful management. Therefore, this area is of substantive value for land preservation as a secondary priority in accordance with the Strategic Targeting Project.

4.4.5 Imminence of Change

The Strategic Targeting Project indicates that the priority system “*must take into account the statutory mandate to consider the likelihood of conversion from agricultural land use*” and “*should call attention to the farmlands ...subject to the greatest development pressures and least likely to be available for preservation 3,5 or 10 years from now*”. These priorities can be summarized as the “imminence of change” factor.

The targeting project recognizes that public investment well-removed from development pressure may preserve farmland that is not under an immediate threat of conversion. Conversely, public investment in an area where conversion has been occurring for some time and is suited for continued growth in terms of roads and planned infrastructure is very costly and may not achieve the objectives of the Smart Growth Plan.

Although Pilesgrove Township experienced increases in land sale prices, as well as subdivision and building permit activity, prior to the economic downturn in 2008, those indicators have subsided in recent years. From a public investment strategy standpoint, there is an opportunity to acquire lands at reduced values during recessionary periods provided that public funds are available for that purpose. The need for easement acquisition funding often increases when the housing market is vibrant when values increase.

Nevertheless, it is no longer feasible to expect that easement acquisition alone of the target farms will be a sufficient land preservation measure. Other preservation measures must be used in conjunction with the easement purchase program to preserve the contiguous agricultural districts needed for a viable agricultural economy. This Plan Update proposes the effective use of easement acquisition coupled with a non-contiguous clustering program to achieve its farmland preservation objectives in the critical area north of Woodstown where change is most likely.

4.4.6. Farmland Assessment

As noted earlier, Pilesgrove Township has the second highest acreage of qualified farmland in the State of New Jersey. Pilesgrove Township and adjacent Upper Pittsgrove Township represent 9% of the qualified farmland remaining in the State of New Jersey. These statistics suggest that farmland preservation should focus primarily on the protection of contiguous districts, with secondary focus on individual farms.

4.4.7 Transportation Network Proximity

Pilesgrove Township surrounds Woodstown Borough that is located at the intersection of U.S. Route #40 and State Route #45. The Township has excellent access since it is located within a few miles of the Delaware Memorial Bridges, Interstate 295, and Exit 1 of the New Jersey Turnpike. The key arterial is U.S. Route 40, which is a dualized highway up to the Township boundary where it transitions into a two-lane highway. U.S. Route 40 is subject to severe traffic congestion during the summer months since it is the most direct route from the Delaware Memorial Bridges to the shore communities in Cape May County. There continues to be a desperate need to improve access in the southern part of the State either along U.S. Route #322 or U.S. Route #40.

The Pilesgrove Township Farmland Preservation Plan Update is seeking to preserve key segments of this corridor in the extreme western and eastern parts of the Township. A key farm (Sasso/Delea) was preserved by the SADC in 2005 on the north side of U.S. Route #40 at the western Township boundary. This property has recently been granted subdivision and site plan approvals to permit construction of warehouse/distribution facilities. Another farm was acquired south of U.S. Route 40 immediately west of Cowtown. There are no limited access highways within the Township with proximate interchanges.

4.4.8 Farmland Preservation Program Activity

Pilesgrove Township is located in an area of prior farmland preservation activity. The previous public investments in the various farmland preservation programs in Pilesgrove Township warrant continued investment. **Map 2** indicates the extent and pattern of preserved lands in the Township. The priority preservation areas require additional investment to reduce the potential for conflicting rural residential development. The planning objective of creating contiguous preserved areas can be achieved with reasonable public investment over the next ten years.

The size of the target farms is also in keeping with the Targeting Project. Pilesgrove Township has several major farm landowners. While the average target farm is in excess of 80 acres, there are several areas within the Project Area where contiguous lands under common ownership exceed 200 acres. The Township is more interested in preserving major farms in key locations than in preserving the greatest number of farms, which is consistent with the Targeting Project.

4.4.9 Coordination with County and Municipal Plans

Pilesgrove Township Farmland Preservation Plan Update is fully coordinated with its adopted Master Plan. The Township Planning board is consistently reviewing means of promoting farmland preservation in a positive manner.

This Farmland Preservation Plan Update is also fully consistent with the Salem County Farmland Preservation plan. While there are substantive differences with the County on farmland preservation policies, including strategic targeting perspectives, the objective of the Township Farmland Preservation Plan is fully consistent and coordinated with the County Plan.

4.4.10 State Development and Redevelopment Plan Consistency

The Pilesgrove Township Farmland Preservation Plan is fully consistent with the Rural Planning Area designation for much of Pilesgrove Township.

4.4.11 Garden State Greenways Coordination

The Township's Farmland Preservation Plan is fully coordinated with the Garden State Greenways program. The Township's involvement with the New Jersey Conservation Foundation is helpful in this regard. The areas being preserved by Green Acres are within the Township's Project Area.

4.4.12 Critical Resource Areas

There are no critical resource areas within Pilesgrove Township.

4.4.13 Crossroads of the American Revolution

Pilesgrove Township does not contain any Crossroads of the American Revolution Special Resource Areas as defined in the Strategic Targeting Project. Nevertheless, the cattle drive from this area of Salem County undertaken by Mad Anthony Wayne to the Valley Forge encampment is probably the most important example of the agricultural industry's involvement in, and support of, the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. The preservation of lands where this cattle drive originated is critical to American history. One of the reasons for the subsequent battle of Quinton's Bridge was to punish the people of Salem County for their support of the Continental Army.

4.4.14 NJ Trails Plan

None of the proposed trails shown on the New Jersey Trails Plan bisect Pilesgrove Township.

4.4.15 Watershed Management Coordination

Pilesgrove Township has prepared a draft Watershed Management Plan (WMP). The draft WMP addresses the need for planned infrastructure in the area to enable the implementation of the strategy to cluster compact development as a potential future development alternative to conventional development. The Township adopted a Conservation Design Ordinance in 2009 that provides zoning incentives for onsite clustering as a way to preserve farmland, open space, and to minimize impacts on environmental resources. The draft WMP also addresses issues that may affect environmental compliance activities in the Township including septic tank management, nitrate dilution modeling, and TMDL implementation. The objective of the WMP is to achieve improved environmental conditions by reducing non-point source pollution from land development and by the implementation of best management practices by agricultural enterprises. The intent of the WMP will be to involve the local farming community in the resolution of critical environmental issues without adversely impacting their operations.

4.4.16 Groundwater Recharge and Protection

The designated Project Area in Pilesgrove Township contains extensive aquifer recharge areas for the Mount Laurel and Cohansey formations, which are important aquifers in southern New Jersey. In fact, the lands along the western Township boundary are very susceptible to degradation due to their sandy consistency. It is critical that these aquifer recharge areas be protected with proper land management. In this respect, farmland preservation is an important means of protecting a limited and critical natural resource.

4.4.17 Targeting Project Consistency

In addition to the foregoing, the Pilesgrove Township Farmland Preservation Plan is consistent with the SADC strategic targeting project in the following manners:

- Three of the Township's Phase I Planning Incentive Grant applications were strategically located in the western part of the Township. Preservation of the Ostrum and Byrnes farms in conjunction with prior preserved farmland created a continuous line of preserved land from the Borough of Woodstown to the Oldmans Township line. In addition, the preservation of the Sasso/Delea farm on the north side of US Route 40 has

protected the north side of that corridor from encroachment and has helped to establish the southern limit of what could be an expansive preserved agricultural district.

- The preservation of the Mulligan, Caltabiano, and Musumeci farms has helped define the limit of the AR zoning district at its interface with the SR zoning district. These three farms were preserved in a coordinated manner by the Township and the NJCF Planning Incentive Grants. The SR zoning district along the northern tier of the Township is the location of several residential subdivisions.
- The expanded Project Area facilitates creation of a contiguous agricultural preservation area in the eastern part of the Township in conjunction with preservation efforts in Upper Pittsgrove Township.
- Green Acres is acquiring land tracts to the east of Woodstown on the south side of the Salem River to create an expansive greenway. The open space acquisition is fully consistent with the Farmland Preservation Plan Update. The Project Area generally would extend but not conflict with this linear open space acquisition program.
- The area due north of Woodstown Borough to the east of the railroad and west of State Route #45 is most conducive to non-contiguous clustering and conservation design programs since the easement purchase programs have not been effective in this area to date.

4.5 COORDINATION WITH MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION INITIATIVES

Pilesgrove Township is coordinating its open space preservation policies with its farmland preservation program. The Township has supported the efforts of the State and the County to acquire a greenway along the Salem River. Much of this land acquisition has been located on the south side of the stream corridor to the east of Woodstown.

The Township also supports limited open space acquisition in the Sharptown area to preserve the important stream corridors and critical habitats in that area. Any such acquisition efforts along the stream corridors should be structured to be compatible with farmland preservation objectives. The Township's Open Space and Conservation Plan recommends the long-term expansion of Marlton Park to the west. The parcel targeted for acquisition will be subdivided so that a portion will be acquired for open space and a portion will be acquired for farmland preservation.

The primary conflict between open space acquisition and farmland preservation is with regard to Township funding. The Township has fully committed the current proceeds from its dedicated tax to farmland preservation program. There is a need to allocate a portion of the dedicated tax for open space purposes.

4.6 FUNDING EXPENDED TO DATE BY SOURCE

4.6.1 Appropriations

Pilesgrove Township has been appropriated approximately \$9.5 million since the inception of the Planning Incentive Grant program.

Table 19
Farmland Preservation Program
Planning Incentive Grant Appropriations (Phase I)

Funding round	Appropriation	Cumulative
FY 2005	\$441,822	\$441,822
FY 2006	\$800,000	\$1,241,822
FY2007	\$1,500,000	\$2,741,822
FY 2008	\$1,500,000	\$4,241,822
FY 2009	\$750,000	\$4,991,822
FY 2011	\$500,000	\$5,491,822
FY 2013	\$500,000	\$5,991,822
FY 2017/18	\$500,000	\$6,491,822
FY 2019	\$1,000,000	\$7,491,822
FY 2021	\$1,000,000	\$8,491,822
FY 2022	\$1,000,000	\$9,491,822

Source: SADC, January 10, 2023

The funding that has been extended or committed through Fiscal Year 2022 summarized in **Table 19**. The Township intends to fully utilize future State grant appropriations but also intends to leverage state and local funding, wherever possible with other funding sources.

4.7 MONITORING OF PRESERVED FARMLAND

Currently, the Township does not have a direct role in monitoring preserved farmland since it is not the holder of the easements. There may be situations in the future

in which the Township may hold easements from clustered developments and would be responsible for enforcing any easements that are conveyed to the Township.

The Salem CADB monitors the preserved farmland for which the County holds an easement and the SADC monitors the farmland in the Township for which it holds the easement. The Township will be requesting copies of any monitoring or inspection reports prepared by the County or SADC for deed-restricted farmland located within the Township.

4.8 COORDINATION WITH TDR PROGRAMS

There are no existing TDR programs in Pilesgrove Township. Although there has been some discussion about a regional TDR program in Salem County, action on this strategy is not within the control of the Township.

The Township has indicated in this Plan Update and in the draft Wastewater Management Plan that the clustering of development rights from areas slated for preservation to areas suited for compact development by a single entity is an essential and integral element of the Township's Farmland Preservation Plan Update. The use of non-contiguous clustering for planned development will be used to implement this objective.

From a municipal planning perspective, agricultural land preservation should be focused in those areas with the most suitable conditions for agricultural production, to establish greenbelts around residential zones, and to protect natural resources including aquifer recharge areas, floodplains, wetlands, and scenic vistas. The farmland preservation program should also be designed to preserve contiguous agricultural districts, which to the extent possible coincide with agricultural zoning districts. These districts should be of sufficient size to allow the use of the most cost-efficient farming methods without concern about conflicting land uses. The Township's proposed use of easement acquisition and non-contiguous clustering will be structured to maximize participation in the farmland preservation program.

V. FUTURE FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

5.1 PRESERVATION GOALS

5.1.1 Township Planning Incentive Grant Farmland Preservation Goal

The goal of the current Planning Incentive Grant program is to acquire or otherwise preserve the identified target farms during the ten-year planning period (2023-2033). While it is recognized that some landowners may not choose to participate in the farmland preservation program, the planning objective will be to preserve as much of the lands within the defined Project Area as is feasible. The Project Area limits may be changed in the future but the goal is to provide the opportunity for land preservation to the target farms either through easement acquisition (under one of several programs), or the clustering of development rights on non-contiguous parcels.

The goal of ensuing Planning Incentive Grant application will be to acquire the development rights for two farms each year encompassing an annual average of 100 acres, resulting in additional 1,000 acres preserved during the ten-year period. When added to the lands that have been preserved or will be preserved, the total land preservation objective under this program is 2,000 acres.

5.1.2 Assumed Goals of Other Preservation Programs

The Township has made certain assumptions regarding other farmland preservation programs and their anticipated level of involvement in the Township Project Area. The three other farmland preservation programs in Pilesgrove Township are the SADC Direct Easement Purchase program, the County Planning Incentive Grant program, and the NJCF Planning Incentive Grant program.

5.1.2.1 SADC Direct Easement

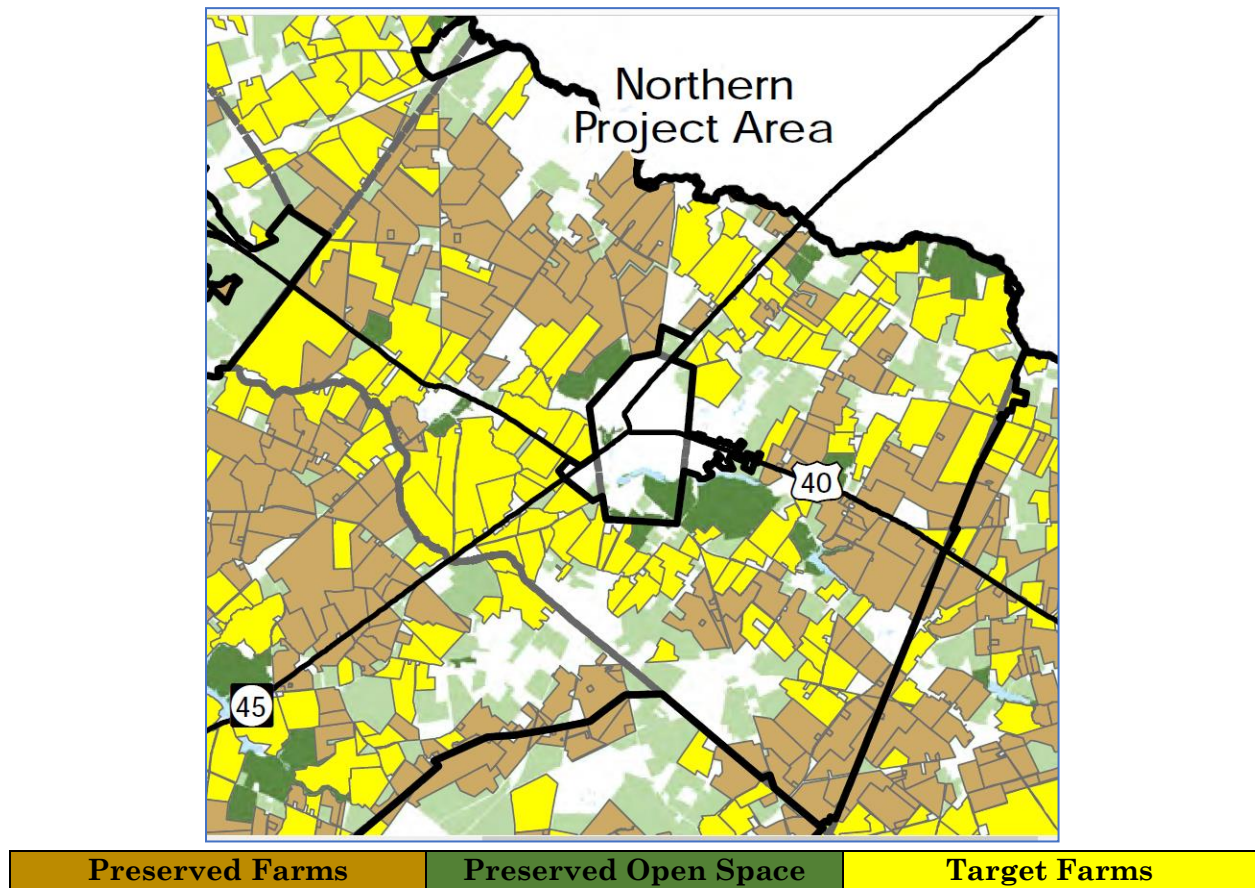
The SADC Direct Easement purchase program has resulted in the preservation of 2,982 acres in the Township between 1991 and 2022. this plan assumes that the SADC will preserve 750 acres over the next ten years under the direct easement program within the Township Project Area. This assumption is based on a continuation of the same level of direct easement purchases and a strong state financial commitment.

5.1.2.2 County Planning Incentive Program

The County Easement Purchase program has resulted in the preservation of over 2600 acres between 1992 and 2008 in Piles Grove Township. No farms have been preserved in Piles Grove via the County easement purchase program since 2008.

The 2022 County Plan Update includes a list of target farms for its Planning Incentive Grant program that encompass 7,315 acres within the Township Project Area. Therefore, it is evident that there is sufficient interest to achieve these goals under the County's farmland preservation program provided that County funding is adequate and the Township applications rank favorably. It has been assumed that the County will continue to pursue farmland preservation in Piles Grove Township at prior rates and that the Township Planning Incentive Grant program will not affect the County farmland preservation efforts in either a positive or negative manner.

Map 6
Salem County Target Farms in Piles Grove Township



Source: Salem County Farmland Preservation Plan, April 2022

5.1.2.3 New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) Planning Incentive Grant Program

The NJCF has initiated a Planning Incentive Grant program within the Oldmans Creek watershed. The Township has entered into an arrangement with the NJCF for land preservation projects within Pilesgrove Township. It has been assumed that the NJCF will continue this program over the next ten years resulting in the preservation of an additional 500 acres in the Township. It is anticipated that the NJCF will prioritize lands in the Township adjacent to sections of the Salem River and its tributaries, including Oldmans Creek.

5.1.3 Clustering/Transfer

It is further assumed that when the necessary infrastructure becomes available, the Township will implement non-contiguous clustering or a transfer of development rights program that will result in the preservation of additional lands within the Project Areas. The 1,310 acre preservation goal from non-contiguous clustering is achievable in the ten-year time frame if suitable infrastructure is developed to enable compact development in designated areas adjacent to Woodstown Borough.

5.1.4 Overall Township Farmland Preservation Goals

As previously indicated, a total of 7,963.9 acres have been preserved within Pilesgrove Township and an additional 216.4 acres will be preserved under pending Planning Incentive Grant applications for a projected total of 8,180.36 acres. The acreage goals for 2022-2032 are summarized below:

- The Township farmland preservation goal for its Planning Incentive Grant program is to preserve 1,000 acres.
- The three other farmland preservation programs will preserve a total of 1,250 acres over the next ten years of which within the Township Project Area.
- The total farmland preservation goal for the ten-year period (2022-2032) is 2,250 acres.

Based on the foregoing, the total preserved farmland in Pilesgrove Township by 2032 would be 10,300 acres or 63% of the Township's qualified farmland.

5.2 PROJECT AREA SUMMARY

5.2.1 Agricultural Development Areas (ADAs)

The Township's Agricultural Retention (AR) zoning district was generally defined in 1994 based on an analysis of the Township's soils, land use, environmental limitations, and farm characteristics. The basic criteria in delineating the AR zone were to delineate the areas with good agricultural soils characteristics that had only slight limitations for development and had an active agricultural land use. The average parcel size was also to be conducive to continued farming operations.

The focus of the current Farmland Preservation Plan is to permanently preserve as much of the AR zoning district as is feasible. Therefore, the Township has proposed that the entire AR zoning district, except for lands that do not satisfy the minimum eligibility criteria or lands committed to another use, be designated as Target Farms within the Project Areas.

All targeted farms are eligible for SADC Planning Incentive Grant approval. Pilesgrove is following Salem County's lead in expanding its Project Area. A significant number of large and/or contiguous farms exist throughout the Township. The preponderance of high-quality farm soils and the level of landowner participation are determining factors in the expansion of the Project Area. In this manner, the Agricultural Advisory Committee can best target contiguous farms across the Township, especially farmland that is more likely to be developed.

The municipal Project Area in this Plan Update encompasses 20,039 acres representing about 89% of the Township's land area. Accounting for pending applications, 8,057 acres are preserved farmland, which accounts for fifty (50) percent of total assessed farmland acreage.

Table 20 contains a list of target farm parcels which describes all or portions of 205 farms or lands in common ownership encompassing 7,798.14 acres of land. In addition to a preponderance of soils on the target farms classified as Prime Soils, Soils of Statewide Importance, or Unique Soils, the Project Area contains expansive pasturelands that are important to the retention of the agricultural uses in this area and are contiguous to preserved lands. This Project Area also includes an expansive area of "Other soils" along the western Township border that are very productive when properly managed.

In term of funding, this plan anticipates a 60% share from the SADC and 40% from local sources. The Township will pursue arrangements that will maximize the

leverage of local funds including the use of non-profit contributions, county matching funds, and Federal Ranchland Program (FRPP) funding. The Township will also be pursuing other preservation mechanisms for this area involving contiguous and non-contiguous clustering to reduce the extent of easement purchases.

Table 20
Pilesgrove Township Target Farm Parcels

BLOCK	LOT	PROPERTY LOCATION	OWNER'S_NAME	CALCULATED ACRES
11	8	POINT AIRY RD	PATTEN, JOSEPH P & JANICE L	162.81
11	3	SWEDESBORO RD	PATTEN, SEBASTIAN J	91.83
11	14	ROUTE 45	SORBELLO, BENNY A FAMILY LLC	52.45
11	9	LINCOLN RD	WILKINS, JOHN R + LILLIAN G	17.18
12	9	ELDRIDGES HILL RD	SORBELLO, BENNY A FAMILY LLC	22.44
12	7.01	ELDRIDGES HILL RD	LANZA, NOREEN + MASI, PATRICIA 10%	6.16
12	3.02	ROUTE 45	LANZA, NOREEN D	34.77
12	6	ROUTE 45 + POINT AIRY RD	SORBELLO, BENNY A FAMILY LLC	64.88
12	3.01	ROUTE 45	WOODRUFF, ROBERT A + JENNIFER K	47.74
13	13.01	ELDRIDGES HILL RD	FOSTER, STEVEN & SUSAN SICKLER	30.42
13	13	ELDRIDGES HILL ROAD	JAMES, STEPHEN P & SUSAN S	27.00
13	5	POINT AIRY RD	DOBLE, ETHEL M	16.30
13	4	POINT AIRY RD	MORNING STAR BAPTIST CHURCH	20.79
13	17	STATE HWY ROUTE 45	COOMBS, BRUCE C	14.41
13	5.04	POINT AIRY RD	DOBLE, ETHEL M	10.24
13	11	ROUTE 45	BROWN, DANIEL JR	7.70
14	10	STEWART RD	CULP, WILLIAM G & PATRICIA A	19.49
14	4	STEWART RD	KURTZ, NORMA M, IRREVOCABLE TRUST	32.40
14	5	LINCOLN RD	GEMBERLING, DOROTHY M & JOSEPH R JR	13.51
14	6.07	ELDRIDGES HILL RD	PULTRO, KRISTIN + VEALE, KYLE	11.06
14	9	WHIG LANE RD	GEMBERLING, DOROTHY M & JOSEPH R JR	71.10
14	3	LINCOLN RD	GEMBERLING, DOROTHY M & JOSEPH R JR	58.32
15	2.03	LINCOLN RD	TIMCHAL, GEORGE D & NANCY R	6.55
15	1	STEWART RD	KURTZ, NORMA M, IRREVOCABLE TRUST	41.69
15	6.02	STEWART RD	CULP, WILLIAM G & PATRICIA ANN	3.85
16	2.01	LINCOLN RD	CALTABIANO, MARIO R & CATHERINE M	17.76
16	2.02	LINCOLN RD	CALTABIANO, MARIO R & CATHERINE M	5.59
16	7	469 LINCOLN RD	LARRABEE, SALLY BETH	33.95
16	3	LINCOLN RD REAR	STRING ALVIN W JR	96.35
17	5	256 HARRISONVILLE LAKE RD	PRICE, HARVEY LEE III + PIRRI, JOHN	37.94
17	10	ADAMS RD	PIERSON, RICHARD E	124.87
17	6	HARRISONVILLE LAKE RD	PIERSON, RICHARD E	43.41
18	5.01	LINCOLN RD	DENELSBECK, KENNETH R & CATHY T	10.02
18	1	HARRISONVILLE LAKE RD	PIERSON, RICHARD E	25.24
18	4	HARRISONVILLE LAKE RD	PIERSON, RICHARD E	36.12
18	2			9.78

18	3.01	LINCOLN RD	PIERSON, RICHARD E	102.79
18	5.02	LINCOLN RD	DANNER, MARK J + THERESA K	10.97
19	8	WHIG LANE RD	JONES, WILLIAM M JR & GINGER L	16.60
19	1.03	LINCOLN RD	OTT, NICHOLAS A	17.59
19	1.14	LINCOLN RD	OTT, DOUGLAS & LINDA	1.38
19	7	WHIG LANE RD	JONES, WILLIAM M JR & GINGER L	6.31
19	1.02	546 LINCOLN RD	ZIGO, TRAVIS + SUZANNE	18.22
19	2.01	LAYTON RD	FAZZIO, CHRISTOPHER + KORNLEK, C	14.43
19	3	HARRISONVILLE LAKE RD	ONESTI, SHERRY M	19.81
19	1.15			1.41
19	6	WHIG LANE RD	JONES, WILLIAM M JR & GINGER L	1.81
2	8.04	441 AUBURN RD	MANOLOPOULOS, NORMA A	14.43
2	9	AUBURN RD	HUSKEY, EDEL & SCHLAGETER, MARK H/W	77.23
2.08	8.02	AUBURN RD	KILLDEER FARM LLC	5.91
2.08	2	AUBURN RD	CLEVELAND PLAZA ASSOC, LLC	82.01
20	6	WHIG LANE RD	PIERSON, RICHARD E	71.09
20	1	LAYTON RD	PIERSON, RICHARD E	87.05
20	5	WHIG LANE RD	COTLER, JOSEPH & MAXINE	57.94
20	2.05	LINCOLN RD	MANGANARO, JACQUELINE M	7.43
21	2	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	CLEVELAND PLAZA ASSOC, LLC	72.85
21	5	AUBURN RD	HEIKEN, DONALD L + SUSAN E	7.81
21	8	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	BYRNES, EDWARD L & BARBARA L	10.23
22	9	834 POINTERS AUBURN RD	OLLEK, FRANK M III + DOLORES C	19.83
22	2.02	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	BURKE, COLIN J & LUCY	50.13
22	11	FEATHERBED LN	JT KELLY REVOC TRUST, % JAMES REGIN	29.50
22	4	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	HARRIS, HOWARD GRANT	21.61
23	1	FEATHERBED LANE	JT KELLY REVOC TRUST, % JAMES REGIN	54.99
24	5.04	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	CASSADAY, WILLIAM J + SUSAN I	14.22
24	5	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	AUBURN ROAD PROPERTIES, LLC	14.84
24	5.06	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	YEN, JEFFERY H % DEBBIE YEN	18.53
24	7	58 JILL RD	JT KELLY REVOC TRUST, % JAMES REGIN	108.92
24	5.05	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	ESGRO, GREGORY	18.26
24	6	JILL RD	JT KELLY REVOC TRUST, % JAMES REGIN	29.04
25	7	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	H & I HARRIS COMPANY LLC % G HARRIS	59.55
25	1.05	FEATHERBED LANE	BROWN, NATHAN STEWART	7.15
25	1	SHARPTOWN-AUBURN RD	BROWN, MAXINE L	62.10
25	10	KINGS HWY	HARRIS, H GRANT + ELIZABETH J	32.42
26	1.03	AUBURN RD	DESIATO, MARK A	7.02
26	1.02	AUBURN RD	DESIATO, MARK A	7.09
27	1.04	POINT AIRY RD	OBER, THOMAS C & DARLENE	6.24
27	1.05	AUBURN RD	OBER, JOHN R	6.49
27	1	POINT AIRY RD & AUBURN RD	OBER, JOHN R + DARLENE	9.75
28	2	SWEDESBORO RD	ZRH REAL ESTATE LLC	44.15
29	11	MARLTON RD	QUIRK, EARL	44.07
30	12	MARLTON RD	QUIRK, EARL	114.67
30	11	MARLTON RD	RASTELLI, RAYMOND + GERALDINE	96.24
38	2.04	ROUTE 40	JONES, SAMUEL H JR	16.84

39	2	ELDRIDGES HILL RD	PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	114.01
39	12	ELDRIDGES HILL RD	PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	17.04
39	22	EAST LAKE RD	WORKMAN, LESLIE ESTATE OF	21.73
39	10.01	515 ELDRIDGES HILL RD	HUDDALL, KATHERINE + VILLARI, JOSEPH	10.50
39	21.01	EAST LAKE RD	FLITCRAFT, CLARANCE L	6.85
40	6.03	STEWART RD	STOUT, DAVID + MARIE	14.84
40	7.02	EAST LAKE RD	HAVEN, DONALD R + EARLEN E	23.84
40	7.04	298 EAST LAKE RD	HILL, DENNIS KEITH JR + JAMIE L	7.37
40	12.10	EAST LAKE RD	SMIGEL, DANIEL M & KATHLEEN	12.82
40	13	ROUTE 40	SEIBERT, H A % SEIBERT, HORACE	57.27
40	6	STEWART RD	BOURREN, DANIEL + NAEMI LOPEZ-	23.58
40	12.11	ROUTE 40	FLITCRAFT, EDWARD C & CLARANCE L	25.11
40	6.07	77 STEWART RD	PANTARELLI, VINCENT D + HURBAN, S M	17.02
40	7.03	EAST LAKE RD	MANSOR, DANIEL T + JILL D	9.51
40	7			18.19
41	3.01	HARRISONVILLE LAKE RD	WEAVER, KEVIN M & BERNICE C	14.10
41	3	77 HARRISONVILLE LAKE RD	WEAVER, KEVIN M & BERNICE C	15.85
42	17	AVIS MILL RD	WADDINGTON, MILDRED	7.88
42	3	AVIS MILL RD	FOX, PENELOPE S	96.42
42	2	HARRISONVILLE LAKE RD	SHRIVER, JAMES J AKA JR	7.39
43	3	WHIG LANE RD	PIERSON, RICHARD E	156.81
43	6.01	AVIS MILL RD	TOUSSAINT, RONALD + LAURA M	7.94
43	1	WHIG LANE RD & AVIS MILL	FOX, THEODORE J + PENELOPE S	134.57
44	1	ROUTE 40	EACHUS, MILTON D + MARGERY M	17.58
44	2	ROUTE 40	EACHUS, MILTON D & MARGERY M	12.94
45	5	ROUTE 40	HARRIS, HOWARD GRANT	86.02
45	9	ROUTE 40	COWTOWN AUCTIONEERS CORP	26.84
45	1	ROUTE 40	NJ SOD REALTY LLC	352.72
45	4	ROUTE 40	HARRIS SALES CORP	86.31
45	7	POINTERS-AUBURN RD	NJ SOD REALTY LLC	107.75
45	3	ROUTE 40	SALEM CO FAIR ASSN % BETTY GRISCOM	22.03
46	1	ROUTE 40	H & I HARRIS COMPANY LLC % G HARRIS	11.12
6	22.04	AUBURN RD	FIELDS, JOSEPH C JR & ELLEN HUBER	23.30
60	9	ROUTE 45	PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	26.21
60	8	COUNTY HOME RD	DELEA PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	38.52
60	4.01	112B COUNTY HOME RD	DELEA PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	22.73
60	5	ROUTE 45	PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	99.12
60	3	COUNTY HOME RD	DELEA PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	90.68
60	4	COUNTY HOME RD	DELEA PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	169.50
61	3	KINGS HWY	JT KELLY REVOC TRUST, % JAMES REGIN	101.85
61	5	COUNTY HOME RD	PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	190.52
61	4	COUNTY HOME RD	DELEA PIERSON PROPERTIES LLC	96.34
62	5	ROUTE 40	ALLEN, SUSAN R	139.76
62	3	ROUTE 40	BYRNES, EDWARD L + BARBARA L	19.81
62	7	ROUTE 40	CAMP, SUZANNE + JOHN	51.58
62	6	ROUTE 40 REAR	CAMP, SUZANNE + JOHN	2.95
64	5.01	ROUTE 45	BRUNO MICHAEL HOLDINGS, LLC	40.40

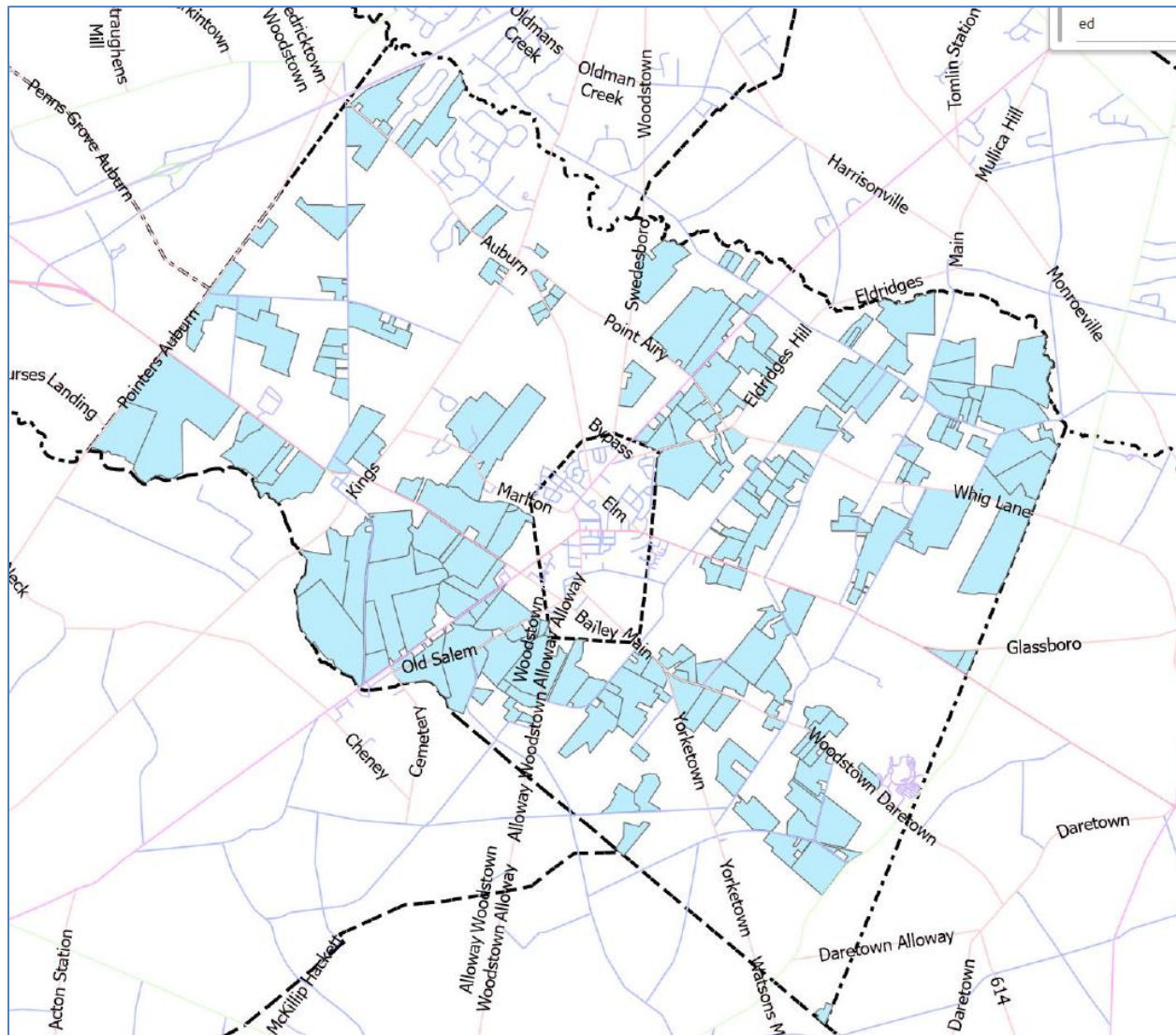
64	3	ROUTE 40	ALLEN, SUSAN R	10.96
64	4	ROUTE 40	BYRNES, EDWARD L + BARBARA L	77.12
64	8	ROUTE 45	DUNCAN, JANET F, REV TRST, TRUSTEE	41.67
64	2	ROUTE 40	BYRNES, EDWARD L + BARBARA L	65.17
65	7.02	STATE HWY ROUTE 45	NEW BEGINNINGS 2007, LLC	10.08
65	8	OLD SALEM RD	COLES, EDWIN W SR & STACY L	65.55
65	7.01	ROUTE 45	MAR PROPERTIES, LLC	10.50
65	7	ROUTE 45	BRUNO MICHAEL HOLDINGS, LLC	5.75
66	7.03	81 OLD SALEM RD	SUWALA, KENNETH F & JULIE D	6.99
66	6	OLD SALEM RD	SHIMP, EDMUND H JR	12.48
66	7.01	WOODSTOWN-ALLOWAY RD	HACKETT, JAMES & DEBORAH	1.82
66	7	OLD SALEM RD	HACKETT, JAMES R & DEBORAH M	5.87
68	11.01	OLD SALEM RD	COLES BROTHERS PROPERTIES, LLC	51.11
68	1	ROUTE 45	SHIMP, CLINTON N	33.49
69	1	OLD SALEM RD	COLES, EDWIN W SR & STACY L	52.05
69	2	OLD SALEM RD	COLES BROTHERS PROPERTIES, LLC	72.77
7	1.01	1329 KINGS HIGHWAY	BASILE, DAVID + JORDAN, MISTY	2.41
7	1	1329 KINGS HIGHWAY	BASILE, DAVID + JORDAN, MISTY	17.84
70	28	FENWICK RD	FISHER, MARVIN + KATHRYN	13.24
70	7.02	CEDAR LANE	LOVETT, ROBERT	10.51
70	2	OLD SALEM RD	SHIMP, EDMUND H JR	70.64
70	31	ALLOWAY-WOODSTOWN RD	GRAY, DESI & LOUIS F & REGINA	5.90
70	4	ALLOWAY-WOODSTOWN RD REAR	SHIMP, EDMUND H JR	5.30
70	1	OLD SALEM RD	COLES BROTHERS PROPERTIES, LLC	15.13
70	3	ALLOWAY-WOODSTOWN RD	HACKETT, JAMES & ET ALS	76.98
70	5	ALLOWAY-WOODSTOWN RD	GRAY, REGINA L	18.83
73	1	ALLOWAY-WOODSTOWN RD	LAM SERVICES LLC	29.39
73	11	EAST LAKE RD	HERDMAN, BRUCE W + ANN MARIE	29.43
73	3	EAST LAKE RD	LAM SERVICES LLC	63.25
74	5	EAST LAKE RD	SPILLANE, ROBERT T JR + HAVEN,KELBY	89.69
74	7.03	EAST LAKE RD	KIRBY, SANTA	70.28
74	5.03	BEAGLE CLUB RD	GATTUSO, DAN C + KYLE M	7.02
74	7.04	EAST LAKE RD	ARMSTRONG, LINDA J	19.88
74	3	574 S MAIN ST	REILLY, AILEEN MELISSA + CHANDLER,J	22.47
74	2	EAST LAKE RD	RJS HOLDINGS INC	19.29
74	5.04	EAST LAKE RD	ARMSTRONG, LINDA J	5.61
76	16.01	MANNINGTN-YORKETN RD	SYMANSKI, STEPHEN & CAROL	29.96
76	4.01	BEAGLE CLUB RD	PRUS, BARBARA D	8.64
76	16.02	MANNINGTN-YORKETN RD	WILLIAMS, JEFFREY & MICHELLE S	32.72
77	7	MANNINGTON-YORKETON RD	LOA, WUNFIE & DENISE HAYMAN-LOA	24.51
79	16.01	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	FEJKO, KAREN M & MICHAEL J JR	15.06
79	33	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	PAULDING, JEFFREY L	7.75
79	18.02	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	RICHMAN, WARREN & P HENDRICKS	40.64
79	30	133C AVIS MILL RD	GLICK, ABNER + ANNA + MILLER, R + M	42.96
79	16	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	ESH, JOHN O & LINDA JOY	5.77
79	12			22.34
79	19.01			13.34

79	1	ROUTE 40	YURGIN, PHILLIP	24.36
79	17	370A WOODSTN-DARETOWN RD	CHANUDET, MICHAEL L + MARSHALL, D R	19.33
79	19	FOX RD	FOX, THEODORE J JR & PENELOPE	100.04
8	6.07	KINGS HWY	KITCHIN, HARRY I SR + ELEANOR P	5.30
80	2	FOX RD	FOX, THEODORE J JR	44.48
81	17	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	DUFFIELD, ROY A + DEBBIE A	18.65
81	18	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	HUANG, KAO HSIUNG + BAYLING	27.69
81	22	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	UWO HARRISON M MYERS - TRUST B	13.26
84	2	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	RICHMAN, PRISCILLA MRS	31.96
84	1.01	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	GEORGES, GEORGE C	38.38
84	1.02	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	ESH, JOHN O + LINDA JOY	38.52
84	5	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	PAULDING, WILLIAM L + KATHRYN T	9.58
84	6	AVIS MILL RD	R M SICKLER SONS FARMS, LLC	60.03
86	10	AVIS MILL RD	LANDOLFI, FRANK JR	44.54
86	6	DAVIS RD	EVANS, LEONARD F JUDITH S	38.62
86	4.03	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	KIRSCH HOLDINGS LLC	9.48
86	9	ROBBINS RD	WILLIAMS, GEORGE B	28.47
86	4.02	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	BROWN, LEONARD P III	10.92
86	4	WOODSTOWN-DARETOWN RD	KIRSCH HOLDINGS LLC	9.12
86	5	DAVIS RD	WILLIAMS, EVELYN K	46.78
86	6.01	DAVIS RD	WILLIAMS, EVELYN K	6.08
87	4	DAVIS RD	WILLIAMS, EVELYN K	70.95
87	6	ROBBINS RD	WILLIAMS, EVELYN K	9.56
9	2	LINCOLN RD	NORRIS, JAMES W III & RUTHIE E	8.29
9	2.04	LINCOLN RD	FOSTER, THOMAS	7.46
9	3.01	LINCOLN RD	GATTUSO, DAN C & KYLE MARY	7.88
91	24	ROBBINS RD	WILLIAMS, GEORGE B	77.20
91	23		BISHOP, BENJAMIN GEORGE	39.38
92	4	ALLOWAY-DARETOWN RD	BISHOP LISA W	9.28
TOTAL				7,798.14

Map 7 depicts the Target Farms identified in Table 20.

Map 7

Pilesgrove Township Target Farms



5.3 MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA COORDINATION

Pilesgrove Township intends to rely on the following SADC minimum eligibility criteria outlined in NJAC N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20(a)2 for its Planning Incentive Grant application:

5.3.1 Eligibility Criteria for Lands Less Than Ten Acres

The land must meet **all** of the following criteria or in the alternative, the land must be eligible for allocation of development credits pursuant to a transfer of development potential program authorized and duly adopted by law:

- i. The land produces agricultural or horticultural products of at least \$2,500 annually;
- ii. At least 75% of the land or a minimum of five acres (whichever is less) is tillable;
- iii. At least 75% of the land or a minimum of five acres (whichever is less) consists of soils that are capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production;
- iv. The land must exhibit development potential based on the following standards:
 - a. The municipal zoning ordinance must allow at least one additional residential site beyond that which exist on the premises;
 - b. The land shall not contain more than 80% soils classified as freshwater or modified agricultural wetlands according to the NJDEP wetlands maps;
 - c. The land shall not contain more than 80% soils with slopes in excess of 15%;

5.3.2 Eligibility Criteria for Lands Greater Than Ten Acres

The land must meet **all** of the following criteria or in the alternative, the land must be eligible for allocation of development credits pursuant to a transfer of development potential program authorized and duly adopted by law:

- i. At least 50% of the land, or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, is tillable;
- ii. At least 50% of the land or a minimum of 25 acres, whichever is less, consists of soils that are capable of supporting agricultural or horticultural production;
- iii. The land must exhibit development potential based on the following standards:
 - a. The municipal zoning ordinance must allow additional development, and in the case of residential zoning, at least one additional residential site beyond that which exist on the premises;
 - b. Where the purported development value of the land depends on the potential to provide access for additional development, the

municipal zoning ordinances allowing further subdivision must be verified. If access is only available pursuant to an easement, the easement must specify that further subdivision of the land is feasible.

- c. Land that is less than 25 acres shall not contain more than 80% soils classified as freshwater or modified agricultural wetlands according to the NJDEP wetlands maps;
- d. Land that is less than 25 acres shall not contain more than 80% soils with slopes in excess of 15%.

The County defers to the SADC eligibility criteria, as it helps to streamline applications. However, the County Planning Incentive Grant Program only preserves those farms that are 25 acres and greater, as a means to prioritize preserving the larger farms within the County, which also helps to maximize the County's trust fund. However, the County works with its municipal partners to preserve farms that are less than 25 acres. Pilesgrove's Agricultural Advisory Committee fully endorses this framework as an efficient and cost-effective financial plan for farmland preservation.

The Salem CADB utilizes the criteria and program guidelines adopted by the SADC as the basis in making its recommendations on farmland applications (N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.20 SADC Minimum Eligibility Criteria.) These criteria include the requirements that a farm qualifies for farmland assessment and that the farm is located in an Agricultural Development Area and farming/agriculture is a permitted use in the municipal zoning ordinance. Farms are also required to meet the SADC's criteria.

5.4 MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY RANKING CRITERIA

5.4.1 Municipal Ranking Criteria

Pilesgrove Township has reviewed its ranking criteria to prioritize farms for farmland preservation funding. The Agricultural Advisory Committee prepared ranking criteria in 2005 which were reviewed based on the factors listed in NJAC 2:7-6.16. The updated ranking system that has been approved by the Agricultural Advisory Committee and has been revised in response to comments from Salem County (see Table 21).

Table 21
Pilesgrove Township Ranking Criteria

Criterion	Weight
Soil Quality	20
Tillable Acres	20
Boundaries and Buffers	20
Size and Density	20
Imminence of Change	10
Easement Price	20
Proposed Exceptions/Details	10
Total	120

The objective of these criteria and the factors that will be considered in the evaluation are described below:

- Soil Quality Criterion. Priority will be given to target farms that exhibit superior quality, require minimal maintenance and have a greater potential for long-term viability for a variety of agricultural purposes. The factors that will be considered in this evaluation will be the percent of Prime agricultural soils and Soils of Statewide Importance on the target farm. Other soils that are specifically suited for the production of specialty crops will also be considered.
- Tillable Acres Criterion. Priority will be given to the proportion of the target farm that is deemed tillable. The factors that will be considered in this evaluation will be the acres reported to be cropland harvested, cropland pastured, and permanent pasture as reported in the most recent farmland assessment report. Target farms that have a significant amount of untillable soils, unmodified wetlands, or woodlands will be given lesser priority.
- Boundaries and buffers criterion. The objective of the PIG grant program is to create contiguous agricultural districts. In this regard, priority will be given to farms that are contiguous to previously protected lands or which contribute to the creation of an agricultural district. Factors, which will be considered, are the adjacency of previously preserved farmland, deed restricted lands, or compatible protected lands. Residential intrusion will be a negative factor unless it is located in a manner that does not detract from the agricultural activities. Target

farms that are located in a manner that will contribute to the creation of a contiguous agricultural district will be given priority.

- Size and density criterion. Priority will be given to target farm applications with the largest size and density of preserved lands. Factors to be considered will be the size of the preserved lands and the mass of the contiguous preserved farmland that will result from the application.
- Imminence of Change Criterion. Priority will be given to farms that have the highest potential to be converted to non-agricultural purposes due to location and the negative impact that conversion would have on the Township's Farmland Preservation Plan.
- Easement Price Criterion. Priority will be given to applications that will enter into option agreements for an easement value that is within the range of prior appraisals in the Project Area. The Township is only interested in using public funds for appraisals and other preliminary work for projects in which it is anticipated that the certified value will be within the range specified within the option agreement.
- Proposed Exceptions/Details. Priority will be given to farms that demonstrate the highest funding flexibility and farmland preservation potential. Factors that will be considered in this final criterion are exceptions that may detract from the farmland preservation objective and the willingness of the applicant to accept the conditions of FRPP funding (i.e. impervious cover limitation). Other factors that improve the attractiveness of the application (donation of conservation easement) will be considered under this criterion.

5.4.2 County Ranking Criteria

The County defers to the SADC ranking criteria (N.J.A.C 2:76-6.16 Criteria for evaluating development easement applications.) The CADB also considers local commitment criterion examining zoning, the absence of growth leading infrastructure, consistency with municipal plans, active participation in the Agricultural Retention and Development Program, and/or the adoption of a Right-To-Farm ordinance and other ordinances that support agriculture. With the sale of the development rights, the land is deed restricted and nonagricultural uses are prohibited. The deed restriction runs in perpetuity with the land.

It is not clear how the County will prioritize the Township Planning Incentive Grant applications with those from other municipalities with Planning Incentive Grants as well as the County's Planning Incentive Grant applications.

5.5 MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY POLICIES RELATED TO FARMLAND PRESERVATION APPLICATIONS

5.5.1 Township Application Process

The Township has prepared this Farmland Preservation Plan Update and intends to adopt this Plan Update after the required public hearing in accordance with NJS 40:55D-13. Among other things, the Plan establishes the Project Areas, the target farms, the minimum eligibility criteria, and the ranking criteria that will be used to implement the easement acquisition portion of the Farmland Preservation Plan.

The Township's practice has been to solicit applications from the target farm landowners by direct mailing. Once the applications are received, meetings are held with the interested landowners to fully understand the application. Applicants are asked to indicate the option price or range that they would want in any option agreement.

Option agreements are then prepared for the applicants and the Township to execute. During the preparation of the option agreement, issues relating to exceptions, RDSOs, proposed subdivisions, and the easement language will be discussed with the applicant. It will also be determined if the applicant is willing to accept restrictions that would make it eligible for other sources of funds such as FRPP funding.

Once the option agreements are executed by both parties, the applications will be ranked by the Agricultural Advisory Committee and by the Planning Board. The Township Committee will then determine based on anticipated funding how many of the highest ranked applications to pursue. Those applications will be forwarded to the CADB and the SADC for their review and analysis.

5.5.2. Preserved Lands Policies

The Township has not prepared policies to distinguish preserved lands from other lands in the Township. The Township Planning Board has recently approved variances on preserved lands necessary to allow the replacement of pre-existing dwellings and to allow the continued use of agricultural labor housing on a case-by-case basis.

5.5.3 County Policies

With regard to County cost sharing on municipal Planning Incentive Grants, the County adopted a policy in July of 2007 limiting its contribution to any one municipal PIG grant to \$500,000 per year. The provision of funding will be the subject of further discussions between the County and the Township. Pilesgrove Township's position is that municipal Planning Incentive Grant applications are worthy of the County's support since the local cost share is reduced by 50% of that incurred under the County applications.

When an applicant applies to a municipality with a Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Program, typically, the SADC covers a maximum of 60% of the easement price, and the County and municipality each pay 20%.

5.6 PILESGROVE TOWNSHIP FARMLAND PRESERVATION FUNDING PLAN

5.6.1 Assumptions

Pilesgrove Township initiated its municipal Farmland Preservation Program in 2004 with the adoption of a Farmland Preservation Plan element of its master plan and the successful pursuit of a Planning Incentive Grant from the SADC. These actions were founded on the approval of a dedicated tax by the electorate in November 2003.

The municipal farmland preservation program has been very successful in preserving land in a cost-effective manner to local taxpayers. In particular, the Township's unique relationship with the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) has resulted in the use of Federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) funds, wherever possible, to further extend the use of State Planning Incentive Grant funds.

The current program has been referred to as the Phase I, Phase II, Phase III and Phase IV program to differentiate it from the financial plan for the next ten years which is referred to as 2022-2032 Farmland Preservation Financial Plan and will conform to the revised SADC regulations.

Pilesgrove Township has prepared a preliminary funding plan for its 2022-2032 farmland preservation program based on the following key assumptions:

- Easement Acquisition Cost. The average cost per acre for the acquisition of development easements will be \$7,500 ; no escalation is assumed

- Assessed Valuation. The total assessed valuation in the Township is \$466,183,400 (2022) and will increase at an average rate of ½% per annum .
- Dedicated Tax Revenue. The Township’s dedicated tax for open space and farmland preservation will remain at the current 3¢ per \$100 of assessed value and will be fully committed to farmland preservation. The tax rate may be adjusted thereafter to achieve the Township land preservation goals.
- Bond Financing. The annual revenue from the dedicated tax will be used to support a bond issue that will provide the funds for easement acquisition. A 30 year bond issue with an interest rate of 3% is assumed.
- Leveraging. The Township will continue to pursue funding relationship with the New Jersey Conservation Foundation and other non-profits to further leverage local funding. Even though these mutually beneficial funding arrangements will be pursued, the 2022-2032 financial plan will not be dependent upon these alternative sources of funding.
- FRPP Funding. The Township will continue to actively pursue Federal FRPP funding to match SADC funding.

5.6.2 Financial Plan

The objective of the farmland preservation financial plan is to outline the local funding necessary to achieve these acreage goals. The financial plan assumes that the cost-sharing parameters of the Planning Incentive Grant program will remain the same and that the other program participants (State & County) will have sufficient funding to implement their programs and to contribute the assumed cost share of the Township Planning Incentive Grant.

5.6.2.1 Background: Prior Phases

Pilesgrove Township has expended or encumbered \$11.94 million between 2008 and 2021 to purchase development easements on 1,000 acres of farmland.

The Township will seek to avoid or delay an increase in the dedicated tax by continuing and expanding its relationship with alternate funding sources and by utilizing federal FRPP finds, where appropriate.

This plan also assumes that the Township will contribute 2% of the cost of easement acquisition for County Planning Incentive Grant applications in the Township provided that this funding plan is approved in its entirety including a local cost-share contribution from the county equal to 20% of the cost of easement acquisition for Township Planning Incentive Grant applications up to \$500,000 of County funding per year.

Pilesgrove Township and Salem County will be full and equal partners (50/50) on individual farmland preservation applications that have been approved by both parties under the Township Planning Incentive grant program. Any funding from non-profit organizations or other third parties that can be used to reduce the local share obligation will be deducted from the local share before it is split evenly. Any reimbursement of funding will be handled in the same manner.

In the event that the Township does not have sufficient funds to proceed with a farmland preservation application due to various factors including higher than anticipated easement values, the Township's inability to increase the dedicated tax, more applications than assumed, or lower than anticipated revenue from the dedicated tax, the Township will not approve the resolution granting preliminary or final approval of a farmland preservation application.

Pilesgrove Township is not obligated to proceed with any farmland preservation application if there are insufficient funds to proceed at any particular time. The Township intends to modify its funding plan as necessary to avoid this type of situation but wants to clarify that the detailed funding assessment for each specific farmland preservation application will be conducted prior to the adoption of the final approval resolution.

5.6.3 Installment Purchase Agreements

Although Salem County had previously required all easement purchases be paid via installment purchases, the County no longer requires installment purchases, and at closing, pays the landowner the full amount in one lump sum.

5.7 FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

5.7.1 Professional Planning Resources

The Township's farmland preservation program policies will be coordinated and administered by the Township's Professional Planner under the direction of the Township Planning Board. These activities will include the preparation and revision of the FPP, the implementation of key policies of the FPP, the reviewing and ranking of applications, the preparation of policy recommendations. All policy actions of the Planning Board will have the prior input of the Agricultural Advisory Committee. The lead contact during the application process will be the Board's Professional Planner.

5.7.2 Administrative Staff

The Township Clerk/Administrator will oversee the day-to-day administration of the program. The administrative responsibilities of the Township will include disseminating and receiving applications, tracking the status of applications, and compiling the survey, appraisal and title information required before an application proceeds to closing. All funding determinations will be made by the Township Committee with the prior input of the Planning Board and Township Administrator.

5.7.3 Township Planning Board

The key function of the Township Planning board is to provide for the preparation and periodic reexamination and revision of the Farmland Preservation Plan Element as an element of the Township Master Plan. As the planning agency for the Township, the Planning Board needs to ensure that policies in the Farmland Preservation Plan are fully compatible and consistent with other Master plan elements.

The Planning Board also periodically recommends and/or conducts consistency reviews of proposed amendments to the Township land development ordinances. In this regard, the Planning Board needs to ensure that ordinances are consistent with the Master Plan including the policies of the Farmland Preservation Plan element.

The Planning Board also implements key policies of the Farmland Preservation Plan during the review of land development applications. In particular, the Planning Board will require the submission of Agricultural Impact Assessments and require the provision of agricultural buffers.

The Planning Board will also review, rank, and recommend applications to the Township Committee for funding under the Township Planning Incentive Grant program.

5.7.4 Agricultural Advisory Committee

Pilesgrove Township established an Agricultural Advisory Committee in June of 2004 by Committee resolution, which has been superseded by an ordinance. The Committee generally meets on a monthly basis to review the status of the Township's farmland preservation program.

The Pilesgrove Township Agricultural Advisory Committee is unique in the sense that all of the farmer/members have been involved in different types of agricultural production and all have been previously involved in the farmland preservation program. None of the farmers have active applications under the Township, County, or State programs.

The Advisory Committee's responsibilities are broad and include reviewing the farmland preservation plan, commenting on policies that impact the farmer in the community, and supervising the implementation of the Township's planning incentive grant program. The specific duties of the Agricultural Advisory Committee are as follows:

- (1) Participating in the identification of Project Areas and/or Target Farms in the Township suitable for farmland preservation;
- (2) Advising Township officials and residents on the different types of farmland preservation programs available to landowners;
- (3) Advising the Planning Board on the ranking criteria to be used in the review and selection of farmland preservation applications;
- (4) Advising the Township Committee and Planning Board on matters related to agriculture and farmland preservation;
- (5) Advising the Township Committee and Planning Board of the potential impact of land use policies and/or development activity on agricultural operations and the mediation of these impacts; and
- (6) Participating in the preparation of, and/or the review of a Township-wide farmland preservation plan element to be adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Township Master Plan.

5.7.5 Legal Support

The Township Solicitor, or other legal counsel designated by the Township Committee, will provide legal support for the farmland preservation program. This support will include but not be limited to, the preparation of option agreements and legal opinions on farmland policies.

5.7.6 Database Development

The Township Planner will be responsible for developing and maintaining the database needed to successfully implement the Farmland Preservation Plan. The database will include, but not be limited to, data on land ownership, land development patterns or trends, and the data compiled for the preparation of the Farmland Preservation Plan Update and the information needed to implement all aspects of the program.

5.7.7 GIS Capacity and Staff Resources

The Planning Board Planner will maintain and update the maps that are contained in this Farmland Preservation Plan Update and will coordinate the GIS database with that used for various other planning purposes.

5.8 FACTORS LIMITING FARMLAND PRESERVATION IMPLEMENTATION

5.8.1 Funding Resources.

5.8.1.1 State Bond

To fully implement the Township program will require \$16.87 million over the next ten years. The Township intends to provide for its respective share of this funding commitment (\$3.37M) via Open Space Trust funds or state competitive funds.

The continued success of Pilesgrove's farmland preservation program is largely dependent on encouraging landowner interest, and other factors outside of the Township's control, such as cost per acre. To encourage landowner interest, this Plan Update enlarges the Project Area and significantly increases the number of target farms.

Although the availability of long-term state funding for farmland preservation has historically been a concern for the Township's farmland preservation efforts, in 2014, New Jersey established a stable source of funding for the preservation and stewardship of open space, parks, farms, historic and flood prone areas by dedicating four percent of

existing corporation business tax (CBT) revenues to preservation and environmental programs through fiscal year 2019. From fiscal year 2020 moving forward that dedication is six percent.

Additionally, in 2016 the “Preserve New Jersey Act” (P.L.2016, c.12) was passed implementing the constitutional dedication of CBT revenues as approved by the voters in 2014 and the Preserve New Jersey Act Preservation fund was established. In 2019, the Governor signed P.L. 2019, c.132 which supplemented and amended the Preserve New Jersey Act, establishing funding allocations for the constitutional dedication of CBT revenues for the State’s open space, farmland, and historic preservation programs for fiscal year 2020 and thereafter. Nonetheless, the Township is limited, due to its tax ratable base, in its ability to raise funds for farmland preservation efforts.

The 2019 amendment to the “Preserve New Jersey Act” provides a permanent source of funding for farmland preservation. The Township should continue to strengthen its association with the county and state, and forge new partnerships when such opportunities become available. These discussions may include fund leveraging through the use of IPAs, and complementary land use tools such as TDR.

5.8.1.2 County Funding.

Salem County has not established a clear long-term strategy for supporting the communities that are successful in obtaining municipal planning incentive grants. The County Planner has expressed concerns that the current 2¢/\$100 dedicated tax is insufficient to fund a county planning incentive grant program as well as provide support to local planning incentive grants. The County's updated farm plan recognizes funding limitations and sets appropriate long-term planning goals. Pilesgrove Township has maintained that the County should support the municipal planning incentive grant programs since the County’s share is by definition less than it would be without the municipal involvement.

The Township funding plan has relied on the policies adopted by the CADB and the Board of Freeholders, which indicates a maximum commitment of \$500,000 per year to communities with Planning Incentive Grants.

The County has an Open Space Tax which is generally applied as \$0.02 per \$100 assessed value. Generally, the Open Space Trust Fund receives \$1 million dollars annually. Nearly all of the monies accrued into the Open Space Trust Fund is used for Farmland Preservation projects. However, should the County apply for Green Acres

funding for either land purchase or park development, the County uses the funds from the Open Space Trust Fund as a match to the Green Acres grant.

As mentioned in the Plan's previous section, the County Planning Incentive Grant Program uses a cost share with the SADC that is typically a 40%/60% split; the County typically covers 40% of the easement price, while the SADC handles a maximum of 60%. When an applicant applies to a municipality with a Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Program, typically, the SADC covers a maximum of 60% of the easement price, and the County and municipality each pay 20%. However, the cost-share match is established based upon the SADC's sliding scale criteria, which varies depending upon the cost of the easement.

The County Plan identifies other funding partners include nonprofit agencies, such as the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, South Jersey Land and Water Trust, and D&R Greenway Land Trust. However, when the nonprofit seeks to preserve farmland, the County isn't typically involved, as nonprofits generally have a cost share of 50/50 with the SADC.

Further, federal funds are also used to preserve farms in Salem County. Over the past 7 years, approximately \$3.7 million have been used by Salem County municipalities and the County's PIG programs to help off-set the costs involved with the preservation. However, federal funds are not necessarily used to for each application. Out of the 77 applications approved by the County PIG and Municipal PIG programs since 2015, only 31 applications used federal funds.

The County had previously required all easement purchases be paid via installment purchases. However, the County no longer requires installment purchases, and at closing, pays the landowner the full amount in one lump sum. Should funding become scarce, the County should consider requiring easement purchases via installment purchases.

The 1-year, 5-year, and 10-year goal for preserving farmland in the County Plan are 650 acres, 3,250 acres, and 6,500 acres, respectively. These estimates are based upon the County continuing to generate \$1 million annually from the Open Space Tax, and assuming the SADC can provide the 60% match. Since the County was awarded \$2 million for the 2022 FY from the SADC for farmland preservation, the County's match will be the limiting factor in preserving farmland.

Since 2015, 130 applications, encompassing 11,097 acres have been preserved through either the Municipal, County, Nonprofit Planning Incentive Grant Programs or

the SADC Direct Easement Purchase Program. The average per acre easement price for the preservation of these farms is approximately \$5,700 per acre. Based upon the restrictions of the County's funds being limited to \$1 million per year, the following spending plan has been generated.

The Spending Plan assumes the following:

- \$1 million will be generated by the County's Open Space/Farmland Preservation Trust Fund annually
- \$2 million will continue to be awarded to the County from the SADC annually
- The Federal Funds is the average of all federal funds used for County PIG and Municipal PIG purchases since 2015
- Municipal Funds is the average of all municipal funds used for Municipal PIG purchases since 2015
- The acres preserved annually represents the average easement price of \$5,700 per acre since 2015

5.8.2 Projected Costs

As discussed in the funding plan, the projected cost of the Pilesgrove Township Farmland Preservation Plan coupled with other farmland preservation programs could be on the order of \$16.8 million over the next ten years. This level is based on past practices and is achievable with adequate funding resources.

While it is anticipated that land values will remain stable, a changing housing market could result in increased land values. If this were to occur, it would undermine a key assumption of the funding plan that land values will increase at an average rate of 4% per annum. Therefore, even if the financial resources outlined in the funding plan were realized, the success of the program would be limited by another steep increase in land values similar to that experienced from 2003 to 2006.

5.8.3 Land Supply

Land supply is not a limiting factor. Pilesgrove Township has 16,279 acres of qualified farmland of which 8,057 acres will be preserved under the existing programs this year. The Township's goal is to acquire easements and/or otherwise preserve an additional 1,000 acres from all four farmland preservation programs within the next ten years. Even if these ambitious goals are achieved, approximately 7,200 acres will not have been preserved by 2032. Therefore, land supply is not a limiting factor in Pilesgrove Township.

5.8.4 Administrative Resources

The cost of providing the professional support needed to implement the farmland preservation program is significant. Although some of these costs can be recouped, the program does involve a substantial outlay of resources for “soft costs”. It is anticipated that these costs will stabilize as the program matures and will be covered by the dedicated funding. It is also anticipated that the administrative costs will not exceed 5% of the easement acquisition cost in any one year.

5.8.5 Landowner Interest

The continued success of Pilesgrove’s farmland preservation program is largely dependent on factors outside of the Township’s control, such as landowner interest and cost per acre. The primary concern is that dollars offered to preserve farmland are considerably less than the dollars paid by development interests.

The cost of purchasing land, the potential limitations of the preservation program once the land is preserved, and the infrastructure to support farming operations into the future are all challenges to the farmland preservation program in Pilesgrove. But the major limitation is landowner reluctance.

However, the certified values of the Township Planning incentive grant program as well as those of the SADC and the NJCF and the County’s EP program recent actions have demonstrated that the Planning Incentive Grant program as well as the other programs offer a viable alternative to the option agreements being offered by land speculators. Based on this recent success, program interest is strong and consistent.

5.8.6 Inter-local Cooperation

As noted previously, the Township does not believe that there will be sufficient public resources to acquire the easements on all of the targeted farms. The financial plan is realistic yet ambitious in terms of the public financing that is required to achieve program goals. Therefore, the ultimate success of this Farmland Preservation Plan requires the use of innovative planning techniques to cluster or transfer development rights, which will require the extension of planned infrastructure into the Township. Lack of inter-local cooperation and coordination between Pilesgrove and Woodstown could limit the success of the farmland preservation program.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

6.1 CONSISTENCY WITH NJDA DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The Pilesgrove Township Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) has reviewed the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Economic Development Strategies Report and has determined that Pilesgrove Township should support the economic development strategies of the relevant agricultural industries in the Township. The key agricultural sectors in the Township are the dairy industry, the livestock industry, the field crop industry, the horticultural (sod) industry, the wine industry, and agri-tourism. The Township also has an emerging equine industry.

There are a number of initiatives being undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Rutgers University to improve the State's agricultural economy. These are outlined in the SCFPP and need not be recited here but include the following:

- The development of the Food Innovation Center in Bridgeton that is expected to result in the opening of new markets through product refinement;
- The SADC's Farm Link Program that is a resource and referral center for new farmers as well as farmers seeking access to farming opportunities.
- The Rutgers Agriculture Experiment Station (RAES) that provides a full range of research and technical publications;
- The Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service (RCES) that provides a variety of programs to improve natural resource conservation and management and the institution of best management practices;
- The initiatives of the Department of Agriculture in increasing the demand for local products through marketing programs and economic strategies.

The County does have community farmers markets in Salem City and at Cowtown in Pilesgrove that are very successful.

It is recognized that the economic development strategies outlined by the NJDA and the work of the various state agencies can have a major impact on the regional agricultural industry, if fully implemented. However, one of the limitations of these

efforts is the need to develop better relationships with the farming community to modify traditional farming practices.

Nevertheless, there are concerns about the level of competition in the wholesale markets for certain agricultural products. There appears to be a need for more direct contracts from food processors and brokers as well as direct marketing of local products. The region should also pursue the development of specialty products especially since the pricing for the products historically grown in the region are often below what is needed for a profitable industry.

The 2022 County Plan Update describes strategies that may be relevant to Pilesgrove regarding the livestock, field crop, horticultural (sod) and wine industries, and agri-tourism. Additional information regarding NJDA economic development strategies can be found as follows:

- Field crops - www.state.nj.us/agriculture/03fieldcropprop.htm
- Horticulture - www.state.nj.us/agriculture/03horticulutreprop.htm
- Livestock - www.state.nj.us/agriculture/03livepoulprop.htm

SADC Events on Preserved Farms

In October of 2017, the SADC approved proposed rules to allow special occasion events to be held at wineries located on preserved farms under certain circumstances. The rules formalize existing procedures for implementing the winery pilot program that was established pursuant to the legislation. The rules also establish the standards for verifying compliance with the legislation's income limit, including audit procedures. The rules became effective on November 20, 2017 on publication in the New Jersey Register.

In March of 2020, the SADC released the final report with recommendations pertaining to the winery pilot program. A key finding of the report was that the SADC recommended the legislature to allow certain farm based "events" that are not currently permitted on preserved farms, to be conducted by owners of all preserved commercial farms, and that reasonable standards be applied to their size, frequency and impact to the farm's resources. The provisions should further acknowledge the need to protect the public investment in farmland preservation and ensure that the land remains primarily dedicated to agricultural production activities.

On February 3, 2023, Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (S757) authorizing commercial farms that are located on preserved farmland to hold special occasion events, subject to certain conditions. Under the bill, a special occasion event is required to not interfere with the use of the preserved farmland for agricultural or horticultural production, have minimal effects on the occupied area, and must be

designed to protect the agricultural resources of the land to ensure that the land can be readily returned to productive agricultural or horticultural use after the event. All applicable State and local laws and ordinances including those concerning food safety, litter, noise, solid waste, traffic, and the protection of public health and safety apply to the special occasion event. https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2022/S1000/757_R3.PDF

Solar on Farms- Grid Supply Bill (S2605 and A4554) and Dual Use Bill (S3484 and A5434)

In July of 2021, two separate solar bills were passed by the State Legislature. The Grid Supply Bill (S2605 and A4554) aims to permit utility-scale solar projects, that are eligible for renewable energy incentive certificates (SREC-IIs) on farmland. The Bill includes standards aimed to protect prime farmland soils and soils of statewide importance, while also establishing limitations on the area of utility-scale projects that can be in within a County and its corresponding ADA. However, these projects are prohibited on preserved farmland and are not eligible for farmland assessment purposes.

The Dual Use Bill (S3484 and A5434) is an experiment to determine which techniques are for using solar on working farms (prohibited on preserved farms) in order to ensure that farming remains productive and viable. The Bill establishes a 3-5 year pilot program which will test the viability of the dual use concept. Projects will be capped at 10 MW (estimated to be 50-100 acres) in size and the overall pilot program is capped at 200 MW (1,000-2,000 acres). The land is required to be actively devoted to agricultural and horticultural use. The lost off prime soils and statewide importance soils in ADAs are prohibited, and dual use projects approved through the pilot program will be a “permitted use” within a municipality.

Rural Microenterprise Activity on Preserved Farmland

The SADC recently adopted amendments allowing owners of qualified farmland to apply for special permits for “rural microenterprise” operations, within certain parameters. Rural microenterprises are certain types of appropriately scaled businesses or activities that are compatible with the agricultural use of the farm. The Act also promotes and incentivizes the preservation of historic and culturally significant agricultural structures (N.J.A.C. 2:76-22.1 through 22.12 and 22.14, and new rules at N.J.A.C. 2:76-22.12 and 22A).

6.2 AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY RETENTION, EXPANSION & RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

6.2.1 Institutional

The primary institutional concern expressed by local farmers is the need for improvement in all forms of primary and secondary marketing. While farmers are supportive of the Jersey Fresh promotion, the program has not fundamentally changed the level of competition for local products.

More attention needs to be focused on the marketing issues that impact the profitability of the local farming community.

6.2.2 Businesses

The agricultural industry in Pilesgrove Township has adequate suppliers and services but insufficient product distributors and processors. There is a continued need to conduct an analysis of the reasons that several food processors left the area to determine the feasibility of attracting new food processors. Please consult the April 2022 Salem County Farmland Preservation Plan - Appendix A for a comprehensive list of Local Services and Providers.

6.2.3 Anticipated Agricultural Trends

Pilesgrove Township has retained certain segments of the agricultural industry that have almost disappeared in other parts of the State. These segments include a cattle and livestock industry, dairy farms, and until recently, a major egg farm. The Township recognizes that the factors that affected these and other industries in other parts of the state are also impacting the local farms but the Township supports the retention of these and other important segments of the agricultural industry.

It is recognized that other trends are occurring in the region that will impact the future use of land in the Township. As noted in Chapter I, the local nursery industry was virtually non-existent twenty years ago but recent expansions have occurred in the sod industry and are expected in the future, in the horticultural industry. While the Township believes in promoting high yield food production farms, it is recognized that non-food production uses are increasing in all parts of the state in response to the demand for horticultural and related products. The wine industry is also expanding in various parts of the State.

It is expected that different forms of agricultural production will continue to evolve in the future. Nevertheless, the use and proper management of the agricultural soils will

continue to be of primary importance in the Township. While the preservation of a farm does not mean that the current use will be maintained, the asset monetization process should assist interested farmers with capitalization of their resources. Proper financial advice for the use of the onetime capital return that results from easement acquisition will be as important as agricultural expertise.

Product development and demand will require more attention in the future. The region either needs to support additional food processors, improved wholesale brokerages, or must develop specialty products that can be direct marketed.

6.2.4 Agricultural Support Needs/Implementation

This Plan Update recommends that a non-contiguous clustering program be implemented in Piles Grove Township to supplement the easement acquisition program. It is recommended that this program be aggressively pursued when the necessary infrastructure is available to provide another opportunity for land preservation.

VII. NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION

7.1 NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION COORDINATION

7.1.1 Township Resource Protection Program

The adopted Piles Grove Township Master Plan contains information on the Township's natural resources including an agricultural soil resource map prepared in conjunction with the Township's farming community. The most productive agricultural soils tend to be located along the Township's western, northern, and eastern fringes. To the extent possible, Piles Grove Township should focus farmland preservation efforts in areas with the most suitable soil conditions.

Piles Grove Township also had a Natural Resource Inventory prepared by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) that presents available data about the importance of the Township's natural resources using geographic information system (GIS) maps. The recent issuance of the soil survey in electronic format provision by the NRCS has permitted the preparation of site-specific environmental opportunities and constraints analyses that consider local soil characteristics.

The Piles Grove Township Planning Board coordinates with the Soil Conservation District on development applications to ensure that provisions are in place to prevent soil erosion and control sediment. Efforts to improve coordination and communication

between the NRCS, the soil conservation district and the Township Planning Board on resource protection issues should continue.

7.1.2 Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assists farmers in a variety of manners to conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources. The NRCS has broad technical expertise in animal husbandry, ecological sciences, engineering, resource economics, and social sciences, and provides technical assistance based on proven practices suited to the farmer's specific needs. The NRCS provides financial assistance for many conservation activities but participation in all of the NRCS programs is on a voluntary basis.

The Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program provides voluntary conservation technical assistance to land-users, communities, units of state and local government, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems. These natural resource conservation programs provide environmental, societal, financial, and technical benefits. The NRCS science and technology activities provide technical expertise in such areas as animal husbandry and clean water, ecological sciences, engineering, resource economics, and social sciences. It is recommended that the Township increase its awareness of the current and potential activities of the NRCS in resource protection measures.

7.1.3 Soil Conservation District

The State Soil Conservation Committee (SSCC), a part of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, partners with localities through its 14 local Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs). Pilesgrove is in the Cumberland Salem SCD located in Upper Deerfield, Cumberland County. The State Committee and all 14 districts are part of the NJ Conservation Partnership which also includes USDA, NRCS and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

This partnership works to increase voluntary conservation practices among farmers and other land users. Among other responsibilities, the SSCC administers natural resource conservation programs and provides technical information on best management practices for farmers, ranchers, and other conservation-minded agricultural producers. The range of conservation services and assistance includes agricultural conservation planning assistance, agricultural conservation cost-sharing programs, application of organic materials on agricultural land, agricultural water supply and management, soil erosion and sediment control; stormwater discharge

authorization and soil surveys.

7.2 NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAMS

There are a variety of federal and state resource protection programs available to the farming community. Some of the important programs are summarized here. The Township Planning Board should be aware of when and where these programs are utilized in the municipality and may propose the use of appropriate programs in key resource protection situations.

7.2.1 Federal Conservation Programs

The NRCS administers most Federal Farm Bill conservation programs, and offers financial assistance programs including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Agriculture Management Assistance (AMA). The “Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018” which expires in 2023 will almost certainly undergo changes based on the Biden Administration’s climate change and environmental justice policies. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 appropriated funds for emergency relief to farmers and funds to strengthen the food chain, but funding for NRCS programs is slotted in the USDA 2022 budget. The 2022 budget is headlined with “Farm Production and Conservation” services.

7.2.1.1 Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACEP-ALE) Program

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) is a voluntary program to help farmers and ranchers preserve their agricultural land and restore, protect, and enhance wetlands on eligible lands. The program has two easement enrollment components: (1) Agricultural land easements; and (2) wetland reserve easements. Under the agricultural land easement component, NRCS provides matching funds to State, Tribal, and local governments, and nongovernmental organizations with farm and ranch land protection programs to purchase agricultural land easements. Agricultural land easements may be permanent or the maximum duration authorized by State law. Under the wetland reserve easement component, NRCS protects wetlands by purchasing directly from landowners a reserved interest in eligible land or entering into 30-year contracts on acreage owned by Indian Tribes, in each case providing for the restoration, enhancement, and protection of wetlands and associated lands. Wetland reserve easements may be permanent, 30-years, or the maximum duration authorized by State law.

7.2.1.2 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary land retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water. The program is primarily a partnership among producers; government, and, in some cases, private groups. CREP is an offshoot of the country's largest private-lands environmental improvement program - the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CREP is administered by Farm Service Agency (FSA) of the USDA. By combining CRP resources with state, tribal, and private programs, CREP provides farmers and ranchers with a sound financial package for conserving and enhancing the natural resources of farms.

CREP addresses high-priority conservation issues of both local and national significance, such as impacts to water supplies, loss of critical habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species, soil erosion, and reduced habitat for fish populations. CREP is a community-based, results-oriented effort centered on local participation and leadership.

A specific CREP project begins when a government or local non-government entity identifies an agriculture-related environmental issue of state or national significance. These parties and the FSA then develop a project proposal to address particular environmental issues and goals. Enrollment in a state is limited to specific geographic areas and practices.

CREP contracts require a 10- to 15-year commitment to keep lands out of agricultural production. CREP provides payments to participants who offer eligible land. A federal annual rental rate, including an FSA state committee-determined maintenance incentive payment, is offered, plus cost-share of up to 50 percent of the eligible costs to install the practice. Further, the program generally offers a sign-up incentive for participants to install specific practices. FSA uses CRP funding to pay a percentage of the program's cost, while state governments or other non-federal sources provide the balance of the funds. States and private groups involved in the effort may also provide technical support and other in-kind services.

For the landowner, CREP is not just a cost-effective way to address rural environmental problems and meet regulatory requirements; it can provide a viable option to supplement farm income as well. CREP supports increased conservation practices such as filter strips and forested buffers. These conservation practices help protect streams, lakes, and rivers from sedimentation and agricultural runoff. CREP also helps

landowners develop and restore wetlands through the planting of appropriate groundcover. By maintaining clear goals and requiring annual monitoring, CREP helps participants measure progress and ensure success.

7.2.1.3 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practices and a maximum term of ten years. These contracts provide incentive payments and cost-shares to implement conservation practices. Persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production on eligible land may participate in the EQIP program. EQIP activities are carried out according to an environmental quality incentives program plan of operations developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or practices to address the resource concerns. The practices are subject to NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions.

EQIP may cost-share up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices. Incentive payments may be provided for up to three years to encourage producers to carry out management practices they may not otherwise use without the incentive. However, limited resource producers and beginning farmers and ranchers may be eligible for cost-shares up to 90 percent. Farmers and ranchers may elect to use a certified third-party provider for technical assistance. An individual or entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, cost-share or incentive payments that, in the aggregate, exceed \$450,000 for all EQIP contracts entered during the term of the Farm Bill.

7.2.1.4 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that helps farmers build on existing conservation efforts. The NRCS can design a custom stewardship program by identifying natural resource problems providing technical and financial assistance to solve those problems or attain higher stewardship levels in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. CSP participants receive an annual land use payment for operation-level environmental benefits produced.

Participants are paid for conservation performance, meaning the higher the operational performances, the higher the payment.

7.2.1.5 Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) provides financial assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations. It is another voluntary conservation program that targets beginning and limited resource farmers, small farms, and producers who have had limited participation in other USDA financial assistance programs. AMA operates in 16 states (including New Jersey) where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low. Producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming. AMA provides financial assistance up to 75% of installation of conservation practices. Total yearly payments may not exceed \$50,000.

7.2.1.6 US Forest Service Stewardship Program

The US Forest Stewardship Program is an additional source of preservation for forested lands on active farm properties that may not qualify under other programs. The US Forest Service sponsors the Forest Stewardship Program, which supports landowners whose property has a woodland management plan that recognizes and manages the wetlands, wildlife, aesthetics, soil and water in addition to the woodlands on the property. This program, when fully funded, offers landowners cost-share initiatives to allow the landowners to fully follow the guidelines in their woodland management plan.

7.2.2 State Conservation Programs

7.2.2.1 Soil & Water Conservation Grants

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) provides grants to eligible landowners to fund up to 50 percent of the costs of approved soil and water conservation projects. Landowners apply to local Soil Conservation Districts, which assist in developing farm conservation plans and ensure projects are necessary and feasible. Applications are forwarded to the N.J. State Soil Conservation Committee, which recommends projects to the SADC for funding approvals.

In order to qualify for funding, farms must be permanently preserved or enrolled in an eight-year preservation program. Permanently preserved farms receive first priority for grant funding.

The soil and water conservation projects funded under this program include projects designed to control and prevent soil erosion and sediment damages; control pollution on farmland; impound, store, and manage water for agricultural purposes; or improve management of land and soils to achieve maximum agricultural productivity. Examples of eligible projects include: terrace systems; diversions; stream protection; water impoundment reservoirs; irrigation systems; sediment retention, erosion or water control systems; drainage systems; animal waste control facilities; agri-chemical handling facilities; and land shaping or grading.

7.2.2.2 SADC Stewardship Grant Programs

Soil and Water Conservation Grant Program – The SADC Soil and Water Conservation Grant Program awards grants of up to 50 percent the project cost to owners of permanently preserved farms and term easement farm participants. Landowners apply to their local Soil Conservation District which will help in developing a conservation plan that is needed and doable. Irrigation, erosion control, and stream corridor enhancement projects are among those that are eligible.

Deer Fencing Grant Program – The SADC Deer Fencing Grant Program can provide 50 percent matching grants to assist farmers with the materials and installation of fencing to protect permanently preserved farmland from crop losses related to deer. The maximum grant award is \$200 per acre up to \$20,000 total to owners of permanently preserved land. Farmers must maintain the fencing (high tensile woven wire) and it must have a 10-year lifespan.

7.3 WATER RESOURCES

The availability of water for irrigation is a critical concern in Pilesgrove Township. High productivity can only be achieved for the vegetable and sod farms with reliable water sources. The Township is dependent on both surface water along important drainage corridors and groundwater resources in other areas for irrigation. While many farms have irrigation ponds, these facilities have limited capacity and are more difficult to maintain.

As noted earlier, water diversions have been approved for the irrigation of over 4,000 acres in Pilesgrove Township and the diversion of over 500 million gallons per month. Farmers have generally reported that there are no obstacles in securing these

agricultural certifications. However, the sod industry has expressed concerns about the availability of water to expand its industry in this area without depleting resources.

There is a need for an overall water management policy for agriculture. The policy should define the need for improved supply sources and for the interconnection of ground and surface water resources. Currently, individual farmers respond to their own needs without concern for an overall water management policy.

The Township also contains important aquifer outcrop areas, which tend to coincide with the most suitable surficial soils. Land preservation should be focused in the outcrop and recharge areas of the most important aquifers.

The SADC Agricultural Smart Growth Plan encourages farmers to “work to accelerate the use of efficient water conservation technologies, such as drip irrigation, and identify and promote new and efficient methods to conduct water distribution on farms, utilizing farm ponds and water reuse options.”

Farmers can obtain assistance with irrigation and water-quality enhancement projects through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS prepares conservation plans for both preserved and non-preserved farm owners. These plans may identify water use needs and delivery systems, as well as conservation practices. The NRCS and the Farm Service Agency can help landowners obtain cost-share grants to implement these plans.

7.4 WASTE MANAGEMENT PLANNING

7.4.1 Animal Waste

The management of animal waste is gaining increasing attention due to the potential environmental impacts of improper waste management practices. The NRCS provides assistance to farmers for proper waste management activities. To be considered a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO), a facility must first be defined as an Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) and then meet further criteria for designation as a CAFO. Since both CAFOs and AFOs have the potential of discharging pollutants to the waterways and since there is increasing attention on the reduction of non-point pollution in the State, there is a need for regulation of major livestock operations.

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture has proposed new rules to assist farmers in the development and implementation of an animal waste management program for AFOs and self-certification plans. When these rules are adopted, the administration and enforcement of the rules will be the responsibility of the NJDEP's

Industrial Stormwater Program. Both the NJDEP and NJDA will require development and implementation of comprehensive management plans utilizing animal waste standards. The plans are intended to emphasize the use of cost-effective voluntary measures limiting the need for permits under the Water Pollution Control Act. It should be noted that the proposed rules would extend management standards to a broad range of livestock operations. The Township should assist the farming community in understanding the obligations under the new rules and in the preparation of the required waste management plans. In particular, this assistance should be focused on the smaller livestock operations that have not previously had to address this issue.

At certain times of the year, major quantities of solid waste are generated by the farming community in the form of waste plastic. The Salem County Utilities Authority has addressed this problem by placing roll-off containers at the County landfill site for the recycling of this material by local farmers.

The management of livestock waste has serious implications for the quality of ground and surface waters. Unrestricted, these wastes can cause serious water-quality problems by spreading harmful microorganisms into water sources to the detriment of humans, farm animals, and the ecosystem as a whole. Pilesgrove's agricultural industry has a fairly minimal cattle and equine sector which has remained steady with a slight decline in beef cattle. There is no dairy farming in the Township. Pilesgrove does have the largest chicken population by head in the County with 553 meat chickens and 607 layers in 2018. These numbers are still well below what would be considered a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) which are classified as any operations with more than 1,000 nondairy cattle, 700 dairy cattle, 2,500 swine, 500 horses, or other animal populations. Any animal feeding operation, even if it does not reach CAFO size threshold, can also be considered a CAFO if it discharges waste into state waters or ecologically sensitive areas. CAFOs are more likely to cause water pollution than other types of operations due to their size alone. Because of the large amount of environmentally sensitive area within Pilesgrove, farms with any animal husbandry should be sensitive to this issue.

Mismanagement of the animal waste has the potential to cause large amounts of soil and groundwater contamination via introduction of bacteria, such as fecal coliform, a known contaminant from animal farming operations. Some waterborne pathogenic diseases include ear infections, dysentery, typhoid fever, gastroenteritis, and hepatitis A. The NJDEP has a statewide strategy to manage and regulate livestock operations which is closely coordinated with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA).

Section 145-39C of the Pilesgrove Code permits intensive fowl or livestock farms to be established in the AR Agricultural Retention and RR Rural Residential Districts

only as a conditional use after site plan review and approval by the Planning Board. The ordinance contains specific requirements for the management of animal wastes generated by these operations.

7.4.2 Recycling

Recycling is an important part of resource conservation for virtually any industry, agriculture included. Recycling saves natural resources and farmers' money through reuse. Recycling efforts not only help to conserve natural resources but can also provide cost-saving benefits to farmers that creatively reuse the waste generated on their farms. The traditional model of the farm included one where animal waste and crop residue were reused to fertilize farm fields, making the farm a partly closed system. Some recycling programs of benefit to farmers, especially to nurseries and horticultural operations, are described below.

The NJDA administers the NJ Agricultural Recycling Programs including nursery and greenhouse films, one of the most successful programs in the nation according to NJ Agricultural Secretary. Film is accepted year-round at two regional collection sites (one in Cumberland County), which each have their own tipping fees. Vehicles used to transport the greenhouse and nursery film are not required to be licensed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection as long as the used film is transported directly to one of the sites participating in New Jersey's recycling program. Pilesgrove has few, if any, hoop house nursery operations but plastic film has become more widespread on vegetable produce concerns.

NJ Department of Agriculture, along with private partners, offers seven selected dates for free plastic pesticide container recycling disposal to agricultural concerns at the Cumberland County Improvement Authority. The program is open to anyone who holds a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection pesticide license and to state, county, and municipal government agencies.

7.5 ENERGY CONSERVATION PLANNING

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture emphasizes the importance of energy conservation and alternative energy use in its Agricultural Smart Growth Plan. Individual farmers were some of the first in the State to employ net metered solar to defray large electrical costs. But, as New Jersey has significantly increased its alternative energy goals, farmland has been increasingly threatened by its desirability for large-scale solar development which are considered necessary to achieve the State's Energy Master Plan goal of 34% solar by 2050.

On preserved farms, alternative energy facilities must be approved by the SADC and are allowed to produce one-calendar-year's energy plus 10% on no more than 1% of the farmland acreage. The SADC's Agricultural Management Practice (AMP) for solar energy facilities is intended to ensure that the primary use of the land continues to be agricultural production.

Solar power is one technology that has proven to be a viable option for local farmers. Solar panels installed on farm buildings and on areas that are not in active agricultural production can provide power and heat to operate the farm. Programs are available to farmers to assist in the costs to implement solar opportunities. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) includes cost sharing for conservation practices in addition to solar energy.

The U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Energy Technology Program and the New Jersey Board of Utilities' Solar Energy for New Jersey Agriculture program provide grants and technical assistance.

More attention is needed to examine the potential for alternative sources of energy on the farm including the use of wind, solar, and bio-fuels. While the County or Township have not implemented energy conservation policies, there is a need to explore the use of energy alternatives in the farming community. One farm in Salem County reportedly relies solely on solar power for energy production. The use of wind power needs to be reexamined and geothermal energy may also have realistic potential for the heating of agricultural buildings.

VIII. AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY, RETENTION AND PROMOTION

8.1 SUSTAINABILITY

Pilesgrove Township envisions that the implementation of the farmland preservation program will help enable a sustainable agricultural industry in the Township and region. The farmland preservation program allows the farmer to turn the family's primary long-term asset (land) into working capital. By doing so, the farmer can reduce the need for agricultural loans and can invest the proceeds into the purchase of additional land or equipment to improve the efficiency of the farming operation. The sale of easements not only compensates the current owner but also increases the ability of other farmers interested in expanding their operations to acquire the deed-restricted land at the farm value cost.

Farmland preservation does not, by definition, preserve an industry nor does it ensure that the current type of agricultural production activities will continue into the future. It was noted in Section 2.2 of this Plan Update that Pilesgrove Township continues to have a diverse and viable agricultural industry. However, there are numerous factors other than asset monetization that impact the sustainability of the industry. These factors include but are not limited to, the continued presence of working farmers, agricultural support industries, markets for local products, and viable working conditions.

The age of farmers in Salem County is advanced. There is considerable uncertainty about the continued presence of farmers that make all or a major portion of their income from farming. While there is a strong young generation of farmers, it is founded on descendants of current farming families. The Township has limited ability to impact the interest of local persons in farming other than to ensure that the local educational system supports this endeavor and to recognize the young farmers that pursue farming as a career

The presence of agricultural support industries and markets is a function of the size, yield, and nature of the local agricultural economy. Several major food processors have left the region in the last twenty years. The need for improved markets needs to be addressed at the regional level. The Township and its Agricultural Advisory Committee should be cognizant of the farming community's needs and concerns in this regard.

The viability of the working conditions is an area where state government can have an impact. The regulatory environment in New Jersey is considered stringent for

farming and there is increasing attention to control of non-point source pollution that may be related to the agricultural industry. It is imperative that State government review its regulations and procedures on a continuing basis to determine the long-term impact on agricultural operations.

8.2 EXISTING AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY SUPPORT

8.2.1 Right-to-farm/ Agricultural Mediation Programs

Right-to-Farm

The Right to Farm Act was enacted to help address conflicts among farmers, neighbors, municipalities, and counties regarding a farm's practices. Under the Right to Farm Act, a commercial farm can receive significant protection from nuisance lawsuits and overly restrictive local regulations, provided the farm is operated responsibly and conforms with generally-accepted practices and the Act's additional eligibility criteria. Formal Right to Farm determinations are made on a case-by-case basis and must include a consideration of the interests of each party, including relevant local ordinances.

Pilesgrove Township was the first municipality in Salem County to adopt a right-to-farm ordinance. The ordinance requires that specific language indicating that the right-to-farm cannot be infringed be placed on all subdivision plats, recorded deeds, and in all marketing materials. A copy of the Ordinance is contained in ***Appendix A***.

In order to qualify for protection under the Right to Farm Ordinance, a farm must meet the definition of a "commercial farm" in the State Right to Farm Act; be operated in conformance with federal and state law; and be located in a zone which permits agriculture.

Pilesgrove relies on its agricultural buffer ordinance (§145-17P) that applies to any land development within or adjacent to the AR Districts. The purpose of the agricultural buffer is to protect properties where agricultural operations exist and/or have the potential to occur on lots five acres or more in size. Minimum agricultural buffer width is 150 feet. If the buffer is not landscaped, no less than 50 feet of the buffer measured from the boundary of the land development tract must be left undisturbed and allowed to revert through the natural succession process. The agricultural buffers are preserved by deed restrictions drawn in favor of Pilesgrove Township to ensure that the Township has the right to enforce the deed restriction.

The Township intends to review and update applicable ordinances to address accessory structures used for protection of farm animals.

8.2.2 Farmland Assessment

New Jersey enacted the Farmland Assessment Act in 1964. The Act recognized that the extensive land holdings required for agricultural production should not be assessed in the same manner as other lands. In a sense, it was the state's first agricultural preservation legislation.

The New Jersey Farmland Assessment Act states that “ *for general property tax purposes, the value of land, not less than five acres in area, which is actively devoted to agricultural or horticultural use and which has been so devoted for at least two successive years immediately preceding the tax year in issue, shall, on application of the owner, and approval thereof as hereinafter provided, be that value which such land holds for agricultural or horticultural use*”.

Changes to the requirements for farmland assessment since the 2012 Farmland Preservation Plan include:

- The annual \$500 gross sales requirement for the first five acres of land was increased to \$1,000, except for lands that are included in a Woodland Management Plan. The gross sales requirement for these lands remains at \$500 for the first five acres. Proofs of sales must be submitted with each application.
- Within 1 year of the new law, guidelines are to be developed by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and approved by the Division of Taxation, identifying generally accepted agricultural and horticultural practices to assist in determining whether land may be deemed to be in agricultural use, horticultural use, or actively devoted to agricultural or horticultural use, pursuant to the “Farmland Assessment Act of 1964”.
- Where a farm's acreage is less than 7 acres, a descriptive narrative of the agricultural/horticultural uses and a sketch of the location and the number of acres devoted to an agricultural or horticultural use on the farm management unit is required to be submitted with the application.
- As of January 1, 2018, all municipal and county assessors with farmland assessed property in their district are required to complete a continuing education course on farmland assessment at least once every 3 years prior to the renewal of their County Tax Assessor certificate. Courses are to be free of charge and offered at least biennially.
- Civil penalties of up to \$5,000 may be imposed for gross, intentional misrepresentation on applications. Penalties collected are to be used in the administration and enforcement of the provisions of the Farmland Assessment Act of 1964.
- The State Farmland Evaluation Advisory Committee is renamed as the State Farmland Evaluation Committee (FEC) and is authorized to review the minimum

Gross Sales amount and adjust it as needed. Increases would not be enforced until the third year following the adoption of the increase. The Committee is to review the application forms every 5 years and make any recommendations to the Director of the Division of Taxation.

- The membership of the FEC is formalized and adds a municipal or county assessor or county tax administrator, and a farmer member of the State Board of Agriculture (current or former member), appointed by the Governor with advice and consent of the Senate, serving a term of 3 years. The Director of the Division of Taxation, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Rutgers, continue as members of the FEC.
- The Director of the Division of Taxation must include with each application an explanation of any new changes to the Program requirements that occurred in the prior tax year and that will be newly in effect in the tax year for which the application is being submitted.

Prior to the Farmland Assessment Act, local property taxes in New Jersey were a strong disincentive to own farmland. The Act has basically eliminated taxes as a serious land conversion influence. However, the Act has also limited the ability of farm communities to raise the funds needed for permanent land preservation mechanisms. Therefore, most of the funding for farmland preservation is from county or state resources in rural communities or from dedicated taxes. The Act has also allowed land speculators to hold land for extended periods at lower cost in anticipation of future development. It is important to note that there are additional requirements for the boarding, training, or rehabilitation of livestock and woodlands under a woodland management plan.

A total of 16,279 acres of land in Pilesgrove Township or 73% of the municipality is qualified farmland under the Farmland Assessment Act for the 2018 tax year (see **Table 2**).

8.3 OTHER STRATEGIES

8.3.1 Permit Streamlining

Streamlining the permitting process can help to facilitate ease of access for new farming operations, and can be practiced by allowing a farmer to interact with one office in a single location as opposed to multiple offices and people at multiple locations, instituting preliminary consultation services, implementing expedited reviewing periods, or lowering fees to encourage activity.

Pilesgrove Township does not currently have a policy on permit streamlining for the agricultural industry. While the Township Planning Board is very supportive of the

agricultural industry in its decision-making, the submission of variance applications represents a major undertaking on the part of the farmer. The concern with any permit streamlining process is that it could become a loophole in the established land development review process. Provisions that would apply solely to preserved land will be given careful consideration as an added inducement for the sale of easements. The Township should consider local input, from the Agricultural Advisory Committee, as to the requirements and disposition of local farmers when reviewing possible ordinance revisions related to agriculture.

8.3.2 Agricultural Vehicles Movement/Routes

There are no restrictions on agricultural vehicles movements or routes. Farmers are permitted to use existing roads, as they deem necessary to carry out their farming activities. The SADC model Right to Farm ordinance protects farmers' abilities to operate and transport large, slow-moving heavy equipment over roads.

When/if funds are available, the Township could consider working with the County to install signage that alert drivers to potential slow-moving farming equipment on the road. Signs could improve public safety, and provide a means to inform the local community that agriculture is a significant characteristic of the area.

8.3.3 Agricultural Labor Housing

Agricultural labor housing is not a permitted use in the Township zoning ordinance, although it is defined in the ordinance as 'Migrant Labor Housing.' Any such existing housing may be non-conforming if it has been in continuous use. The Township Planning Board has granted use variances for agricultural labor housing with appropriate conditions. When/if the need is established, the Township may wish to allow agricultural labor housing provided that any such ordinance is structured to assist legitimate farmers and is not subject to misinterpretation or misuse.

8.3.4 Wildlife Management Strategies

Farmers should be encouraged to manage the wildlife within their land holdings. The leasing of land for hunting can be a significant source of revenue for farmers. In this regard, farmers should be encouraged to protect and enhance forested and emergent wetlands on their property. The use of conservation easements to define the lands that require careful management should be encouraged and should not impact easement purchase values. Township farmers should also be aware of wildlife enhancement programs to protect rare and endangered species.

Like the rest of New Jersey, Pilesgrove is troubled by a large deer population. Aside from expensive fencing, there are limited options available to deter damage from deer. A growing coyote population may, over time, control the deer population naturally.

The other major wildlife management problem for farmers in Salem County is geese. Nonmigratory geese cause damage to newly planted field crops such as soybeans and corn every year. Although federal laws allowing their destruction have been loosened over the years, it is still an ever-present and difficult management problem for farmers.

Farmers are also contending with invasive pests such as the Bag Fly, Spotted Lanternfly, Emerald Ash Borer, Mexican Bean Beetle, and Marmorated Stink Bug. The Township could work with the Rutgers Agricultural Experimental Station, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Salem County, and the SADC to develop ways to mitigate their impacts.

8.3.5 Agricultural Education and Promotion

The Township has limited ability to impact the education of farmers. In this regard, the Township should function as a clearinghouse for information about education and management programs and should sponsor related seminars for local farmers when appropriate. The Township should also educate the farmers about issues affecting the municipality that may impact the farming community to advance responsible and profitable farming interests. The Township should also ensure that the local educational system satisfies the educational needs of future farmers.

The Township should support regional promotional efforts to increase awareness of local agricultural enterprises and the farmland preservation program. Currently, there are a very limited number of agricultural entities that are interested in attracting the public on a recurring basis. One example is Auburn Road vineyards that has a tasting room, and is adding the Garden House to be used for agricultural production, and as a space for wine tastings, dinners and other special events. The Township is interested in promoting any agricultural industry that wants to encourage agricultural tourism provided that the site is designed for public assembly. With regard to the vineyard, site plan approval was gained for limited tours with special events subject to approval on a case-by-case basis if adequate provisions are made for the anticipated traffic.

In addition to the Vocational Technical School located in Woodstown that offers an agricultural science program and has an active Future Farmers of America chapter, there is the New Jersey Agricultural Society's Agricultural Leadership Program which provides educational programming to individuals involved in farming, focusing on leadership development, and management skills. The NJDA offers technical, financial,

and regulatory assistance, and provides educational outreach to landowners throughout the state. The Department also offers, in conjunction with the USDA, farm risk management and crop insurance education programs to assist farmers in the Township.

Farmers are encouraged to register their farms and products with Jersey Fresh, New Jersey's Heartland, Visit South Jersey and Visit Salem County.

Salem Community College (SCC) offers degrees and coursework related to [Agricultural Science](#) through its [Biology/Chemistry Agricultural Science option](#) (part of an [Associate of Science degree](#)) which prepares students for advanced studies at a four-year institution. The program provides foundational knowledge in the biological and physical sciences, genetics, and microbiology, with options for students to pursue careers such as GPS/GIS technicians, chemical dealers, or farm managers.

Salem Community College also offers a partnership program that allows students to complete prerequisites and general education courses there, then transfer to Camden County College for a [Veterinary Technology program](#), preparing them for entry-level animal health careers as vet technicians or animal care workers. While not a 4-year veterinary degree for becoming a DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine), this Associate's degree provides hands-on training in the field and may offer some transfer credits towards advanced studies.

8.4 VISION STATEMENT

Over the next ten years, Pilesgrove Township intends to aggressively pursue the preservation of the important agricultural land base in the Township through a variety of methods. The Township intends to leverage its own limited financial resources with matching grant funds from a variety of participants (Federal, State, County, non-profits). In addition, the Township will pursue planning mechanisms that result in the preservation of land as part of the land development process.

The preservation of agricultural land needs to be coupled with a progressive agricultural development program to ensure that the industry that will use the land remains viable. While farmers are by definition, independent entrepreneurs, there needs to be a better understanding of the needs of the farmer at the local level.

The vision for agriculture for Pilesgrove Township is to improve the viability of the industry in Pilesgrove Township through a comprehensive and diverse effort. The Township Committee, the Township Planning Board and the Agricultural Advisory Committee will need to be the facilitators of this effort. Municipalities in New Jersey are accustomed to be reactive bodies. There is a need for a proactive approach to understand

the issues that impact agricultural viability and sustainability. Most importantly, there is a need to better coordinate the farmers and the various agencies that can impact the agricultural economy through the implementation of targeted strategies. Land preservation and the monetization of the farmland asset that results from that easement acquisition process is an integral element of that vision.

IX. FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the 2004 Farmland Preservation Plan are itemized below along with updated comments.

9.1 FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

- *The Township should urge maximum participation in the farmland preservation program by Township farm landowners. The Township Planning Board in consultation with the Agricultural Advisory Committee should enter into a dialogue with the farming community to understand any landowner reservations and to determine whether the program can be structured to address these concerns.*

The Township does solicit applications with personal letters to the landowners of the target farms. The Agricultural Advisory Committee also serves as a conduit to the farming community. The Township will continue to consider ways of improving communication with the target farm landowners.

- *The Township should initiate a local farmland preservation program based on the recently adopted dedicated open space/farmland trust fund tax to supplement county and state programs.*

The Township continues to administer a local farmland preservation program initiated after the adoption of the Farmland Preservation Plan in March 2004 and the subsequent approval of the initial Planning Incentive Grant. The program has been highly successful since inception and has resulted directly or indirectly in the preservation of 1,000 acres as of 2021.

9.2 ZONING

- A second Agricultural Retention District (AR-2) should be established within the Rural Residential planning district to distinguish between lands within this district which have agricultural value from those zoned for environmental reasons. The difference between the AR districts would be soil suitability for agricultural and development purposes.

A second Agricultural Retention (AR-2) district was established as a result of an amendment to the Township Land Development Ordinance. By virtue of the Project Area delineated in this Plan Update, the Township farmland preservation program has been

extended to this area, and it contains farms targeted by Salem County.

- *Innovative techniques should be considered around any designated Centers to allow an increase in intensity within the Center if the remaining lands are deed restricted.*

To date, the Township has not been successful in increasing the density around designated Centers, but continues to pursue consideration of this approach through wastewater management planning and Plan Endorsement proceedings to achieve the land preservation through innovative planning options.

- *The Township should consider ways of focusing residential development in the established residential planning districts rather than the AR district.*

The Township has discussed various ways of focusing residential development in the residential districts rather than the AR district. However, these efforts have not been successful since developers continue to be interested developing lands within the AR district. Stronger differentials in the regulations between the residential and the agricultural retention districts, and cluster options should be examined as a means to accomplish this objective.

- *The Township should institute more restrictive zoning regulations in the future if the farmland preservation program is not effective in controlling land conversion pressures.*

The Township retains various future options, including more restrictive zoning regulations, if the farmland preservation program is determined to be ineffective or unsuccessful. The objective is to do everything within the Township's ability to make this farmland preservation program successful.

- *The Township should modify the Environmental Impact Statement requirements to include an assessment of the impact of proposed land development in the ADAs on the agricultural industry and on this Farmland Preservation Plan.*

The Township Environmental Impact Statement requirement was modified to require an Agricultural Impact Assessment. The

Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Township Planning Board should coordinate review of these Assessments to assure that appropriate and effective mitigation measures are proposed.

- *Township affordable housing obligations should be met without impacting the Farmland Preservation Plan.*

The Township has adopted a Housing Plan element that provides for the development of a municipally sponsored affordable housing project that will have no impact on farmland preservation in the Township.

9.3 AGRICULTURAL BUFFERS

- *Agricultural buffers should be established at agricultural zoning district boundaries to create an effective separation between residential and agricultural districts.*

The Land Development Ordinance has been amended to require agricultural buffers at zoning district boundaries.

- *Agricultural buffers, consisting of an intensively planted landscaped berm, should also be required around the perimeter of all major subdivisions within the AR districts.*

The Land Development Ordinance has been amended to require agricultural buffers around the perimeter of all major subdivisions within the AR districts. The buffer is to be 150 feet in depth but can be reduced to 75 feet if an intensively planted landscaped berm is provided.

9.4 RIGHT TO FARM

- *The Township has a long-standing policy of requiring that residential landowners recognize the right to farm. Right-to-farm provisions are required on all subdivision plans and are included on all deeds. This policy needs to be reinforced with enforcement mechanisms to address trespassing, pilfering, and related nuisance complaints.*

The Township has not made any amendments to the right-to-farm ordinance or related nuisance issues. When/if the need arises, the Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Township Planning

Board should make appropriate recommendations for ordinance changes to the Township Committee.

9.5 AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY PRESERVATION

- *The preservation of farmland is only one aspect of preserving an agricultural industry. In many cases, the preserved lands are not used for their prior agricultural use. The Township should develop a program that examines all aspects of this economic industry including regulatory constraints, the availability of farm supply and processing industries, and the effective management of natural resources.*

There continues to be a need for comprehensive attention to the agricultural industry to address the issues that impact its economic viability. This examination needs to be conducted on a continuous basis at the regional level. The Township and its Planning Board and Agricultural Advisory Committee should be actively involved in any such discussions. While Township government has traditionally avoided direct involvement in the agricultural industry, it is recommended that the Township in conjunction with Salem County and NJSADC consider sponsoring an agricultural sustainability conference to address the key issues affecting the viability of the industry in this region. It is further recommended that the Township function as a clearinghouse for information for local farmers on land preservation and financial assistance programs.