



# BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

NOVEMBER 30, 2023



PREPARED BY HEYER, GRUEL & ASSOCIATES

# New Providence

## Open Space and Recreation Plan Element

Borough of New Providence

Union County, New Jersey

November 30, 2023

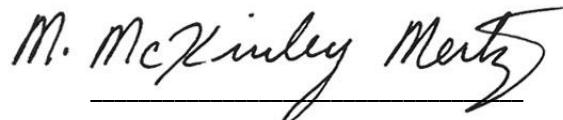
Adopted by the Planning Board on

December 12, 2023

Prepared By:

**Heyer, Gruel & Associates**  
Community Planning Consultants  
236 Broad Street, Red Bank, NJ 07701  
(732) 741-2900

The original of this report was signed and  
sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12



M. McKinley Mertz, AICP, P.P. #6368, LEED Green Associate



John Barree, AICP, P.P. #6270, LEED Green Associate

**Borough Mayor and Council**

Allen Morgan, Mayor

Nadine Geoffroy, Council President

Diane Bilicska

Matthrew Cumiskey

Peter DeSarno

Alexander Kogan

Lisa McKnight

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Denise Torsiello, 1<sup>st</sup> Alternate

Mark Germansky, 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate

Margaret Koontz, Planning Board Secretary

Amanda Wolfe, Esq. Board Attorney

Keith Lynch, Director of Planning & Development

Allison Smith, Director of Community Activities

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## INTRODUCTION

This Open Space and Recreation Plan is prepared in accordance with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Open Space and Recreation Plan Guidelines. The Borough of New Providence last prepared and adopted an Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2006. This Plan supersedes the 2006 Plan and any other previous versions.

The purpose of this Open Space and Recreation Plan is to articulate New Providence's goals, objectives, and vision of open space and recreation throughout the Borough. This Plan will provide a framework for the protection and preservation of open space and recreation opportunities as well as a realistic path for implementation.

This Plan will bring the Borough of New Providence into compliance with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program, which will ultimately benefit the Borough by allowing New Providence to receive matching grants and loans for open space acquisition and park development.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan is a planning document that identifies New Providence's open space and recreation needs through an evaluation of the Borough's existing resources and conditions and public input and puts forth an action plan to best achieve these needs.

### Public Participation

Gathering public input is integral to developing an Open Space and Recreation Plan. On November 29, 2022, a public visioning meeting was held at the New Providence Municipal Center building to collect resident input regarding the Borough's current facilities and programs and any desires for future recreational spaces to inform this Plan. Individuals who were unable to attend the meeting were given the opportunity to email their input. The meeting had 29 attendees and three (3) residents emailed their input. The feedback received at the meeting and by email is synthesized below.

When asked about what amenities residents would like to see in the Borough's recreation and open space facilities, responses include a new recreation center with multi-use space to accommodate various activities, pickleball courts, larger baseball fields, additional bicycle racks, and more benches and picnic tables.

Residents expressed a strong desire for more pathways and greater connectivity between the Borough's open space and recreation facilities. Some residents wanted additional, inclusive pathways within certain Borough parks like Jaycees Park. Residents also suggested a system of pathways throughout New Providence to provide access for walkers and cyclists to the Borough's parks.

Lighting was a concern among multiple residents. Residents said that the Borough's parks need additional lighting to allow the parks to be open in the evening, while still considering the impact of any lighting on adjacent homeowners.

Residents also noted the need for expanded and additional recreational programming in the Borough. Residents voiced a desire for expanded offerings of the Borough's badminton, volleyball, flag football, and senior programs. Some residents suggested new programming to include programs for teenagers that do not revolve around sports and programs for residents with special needs.

## GOALS OF THE OPEN SPACE PROGRAM

1. Acquire and preserve additional land and open space where feasible and where opportunities arise through dedication, purchase, or other means to provide future parks and recreational amenities.
2. Improve accessibility and connectivity within and between the Borough's open space and recreation facilities through accessible, multi-use pathways, with an emphasis on the greenways and blueways running through the Borough, to accommodate users of all ages and mobility.
3. Provide a full range of recreation facilities to meet the needs of current and future residents of New Providence.
4. Utilize the guidelines of the New Jersey Green Acres program and the National Recreation and Park Association to successfully implement open space and recreation opportunities within the Borough.
5. Monitor trends in recreational needs and respond with programming and facility development.
6. Coordinate with regional and local recreation and open space planning efforts, including those of Union County and neighboring municipalities. Coordination with watershed management efforts should also be pursued.
7. Pursue improvements to the Borough's existing open space and recreation facilities to enhance usage and accessibility.
8. Identify opportunities to enhance flood resilience through green infrastructure and flood storage improvements to existing facilities and future acquisitions within mapped flood hazard areas.

## PLANNING REVIEW

### New Providence Open Space Planning

The *2006 Open Space and Recreation Plan* presented the current open space and recreation needs and opportunities in the Borough and laid the foundation for pursuing future funding for open space opportunities. The following goals were identified in the plan:

- Enhance the quality of the community by preserving its current open space
- Potentially acquire new land consistent with the open space tax levy
- Optimizing use of existing space
- Linking parks, neighborhoods, schools and public facilities
- Benefit the regional environment by preserving and protecting the watershed

### Union County Open Space Planning

The *Union County 2010 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan* is a strategic plan for Union County to meet the public space needs of residents. The Plan recommends the County prioritize five goals:

1. Provide an interconnected system of high quality, accessible, multi-use trails and greenway corridors.
2. Update parks and facilities giving consideration to recreation trends and priority needs areas.
3. Funding sources for Master Plan implementation.
4. Preserve and protect the environment.
5. Consistent maintenance and appearance of parks.

The County is currently preparing a new Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan.

### State of New Jersey Conservation and Open Space Planning

The *2018-2022 New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP) acts as a framework for open space preservation and recreation planning in the State by outlining the planning, preservation, and funding for the State's open space and recreation program. The Plan outlines six goals shown below.

1. To assess the amount of open space available for current and future public recreational use and for the conservation of natural resources important to protecting New Jersey's biodiversity and quality of life.
2. To provide close-to-home park and recreation opportunities for residents statewide.
3. To present current information on the supply and demand for recreation and open space in New Jersey.

4. To implement open space and recreation planning policies and projects that are consistent with DEP goals.
5. To encourage open space and recreation planning by local governments and conservation organizations.
6. To effectively use funds from the Preserve New Jersey Act, LWCF, Forest Legacy Program and other sources of funding which may become available.

The plan further identifies five issues that will inform the State's efforts to meet the demand for public open space and recreation demand in New Jersey. The identified issues are land preservation, recreation, state resource areas, greenways, and stewardship.

As the Borough's Plan was being drafted, the state was in the process of drafting *2023-2027 Outside Together! A Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for New Jersey*. A draft of the document was released for public review in September 2023. The overall goals of the SCORP remain the same as the 2018-2022 Plan; however, the Plan is guided by six new principles set forth in an executive order from NJDEP Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette:

1. Expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jersey residents and visitors;
2. Enhancing climate resilience and sustainability through acquisition and development of open and green space;
3. Empowering communities through investments in ecotourism and outdoor recreation;
4. Embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation;
5. Furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation; and
6. Continuing commitments to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity.



*Grove Terrance*

## FUNDING LAND PRESERVATION

### Municipal Open Space Trust Fund

In a 2003 Referendum, voters approved the Borough of New Providence's Open Space Trust Fund. The Fund was established with the adoption of Ordinance 2004-11 in February 2004. A 2021 amendment raised the municipal open space tax to be assessed at \$0.010 per \$100 of assessed value. As of August 2023, the balance of the municipal trust fund was \$997,792. In the two years since the increase in open space assessment, approximately \$146,000 has been deposited into the trust fund annually.

### State

#### NEW JERSEY GREEN ACRES PROGRAM

The New Jersey Green Acres Program was created in 1961 for the preservation and enhancement of New Jersey's recreation and open space. The Program consists of three program areas of state land acquisition, local governments and nonprofit assistance, and planning and technical services. By having a Municipal Open Space Tax along with an NJDEP-approved Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Borough qualifies for the Green Acres Planning Incentive funding category that awards 50% matching grants to preserve lands identified in the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

As of the 2024 Green Acres funding round, municipalities are eligible to apply for 75% matching grants for Completely Inclusive Playgrounds. Completely Inclusive Playgrounds are defined by the NJ Department of Community Affairs (NJDCA) as "a playground designated for public use for children two to five years of age or five to twelve years of age, with an accessible playground surface, a playground surface inspection and maintenance schedule with the standards detailed in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and designed in accordance with the rules adopted pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:27D-123.10."

#### INCLUSIVE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES GRANT

The New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability provides funding to municipalities and non-profit organizations that support making nature and recreational facilities more accessible to individuals with disabilities.

#### LOCAL RECREATION IMPROVEMENT GRANT

The NJDCA administers a competitive grant that supports upgrades and maintenance of public recreation facilities, including local parks and municipal recreation centers. Priority scoring is given to projects with a local match component, and those located in distressed communities. In 2021, the Borough received \$70,000 to repave the Municipal Walking Path located at the Municipal Tennis Complex. The grant was extended through 2024.

## **Union County Open Space, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund**

The Union County Open Space, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund was created by referendum in November of 2000. The open space tax is assessed at \$0.015 per \$100 of assessed value.

Funds in the Trust Fund are used to acquire open space for the County, provide grants to the County's 21 municipalities, and preserve historic properties. Grants offered by the County include the Kids Recreation Trust Fund Grants, Preserve Union County Grants, and Greening Union County Grants. The Kids Recreation Trust Fund Grant provides funding for improvements to recreational facilities. The Preserve Union County Grant provides funding for renovations and improvements to historic preservation projects. The Greening Union County matches each tree purchased by a community, including installation and a one-year maintenance guarantee.

In October 2022, the Borough was awarded a \$35,000 matching grant from the Union County Kids Recreation Trust Fund to create a more accessible playground structure, bathroom building, and picnic patio at Lions Park.

In October 2023, the Borough was awarded a \$50,000 matching grant from the Union County Kids Recreation Trust Fund to construct new stand-alone pickleball courts adjacent to existing courts and potentially to line an existing tennis court to create four additional pickleball courts.

## INVENTORY

### Existing ROSI Properties

Developed and Partially Developed Lands Held for Recreation and Conservation Purposes						
Key	Municipal Location	Name	Block	Lot	Acres	Funded / Unfunded
1	76 Park Place	Oakwood Park	76	35.02	15.61	N
2	1 Grove Terrace	Grove Park	121	32	4.5	N
3	75 Central Avenue	Clearwater Park	124	2	12.294	Y
4	100 South Street	Veteran Memorial Park	163	39	2.31	Y
5	1398 Springfield Avenue	Community Pool	171	13	17.68	Y
6	25 Constance Road	Lions Park	241	49	5.7	N
7	17 Warner Place	Warner Field	353	4	6.66	N
8	164 Passaic Street	Borough of NP	44	7	0.281	N/A
9	360 Elkwood Avenue	Centennial Park	51	1	0.685	N/A
10	341 Elkwood Avenue	Lincoln Field	53	25	4.42	N/A
11	340 Central Avenue	Hillview Field	271	46.02	4.413	N/A
12	40 Maple Street	Salt Brook School	125	10	13.4	N/A
13	35 Pioneer Drive	High School	171	38	23.66	N/A
14	36 Pioneer Drive	High School	172	1	1.147	N/A
15	80 Jones Drive	Roberts School	210	25	16.316	N/A
16	124 South Street	Borough of NP	163	40	0.743	Y
*	128 South Street	Borough of NP	163	41	.072	Y
*	132 South Street	Borough of NP	163	42	.113	Y

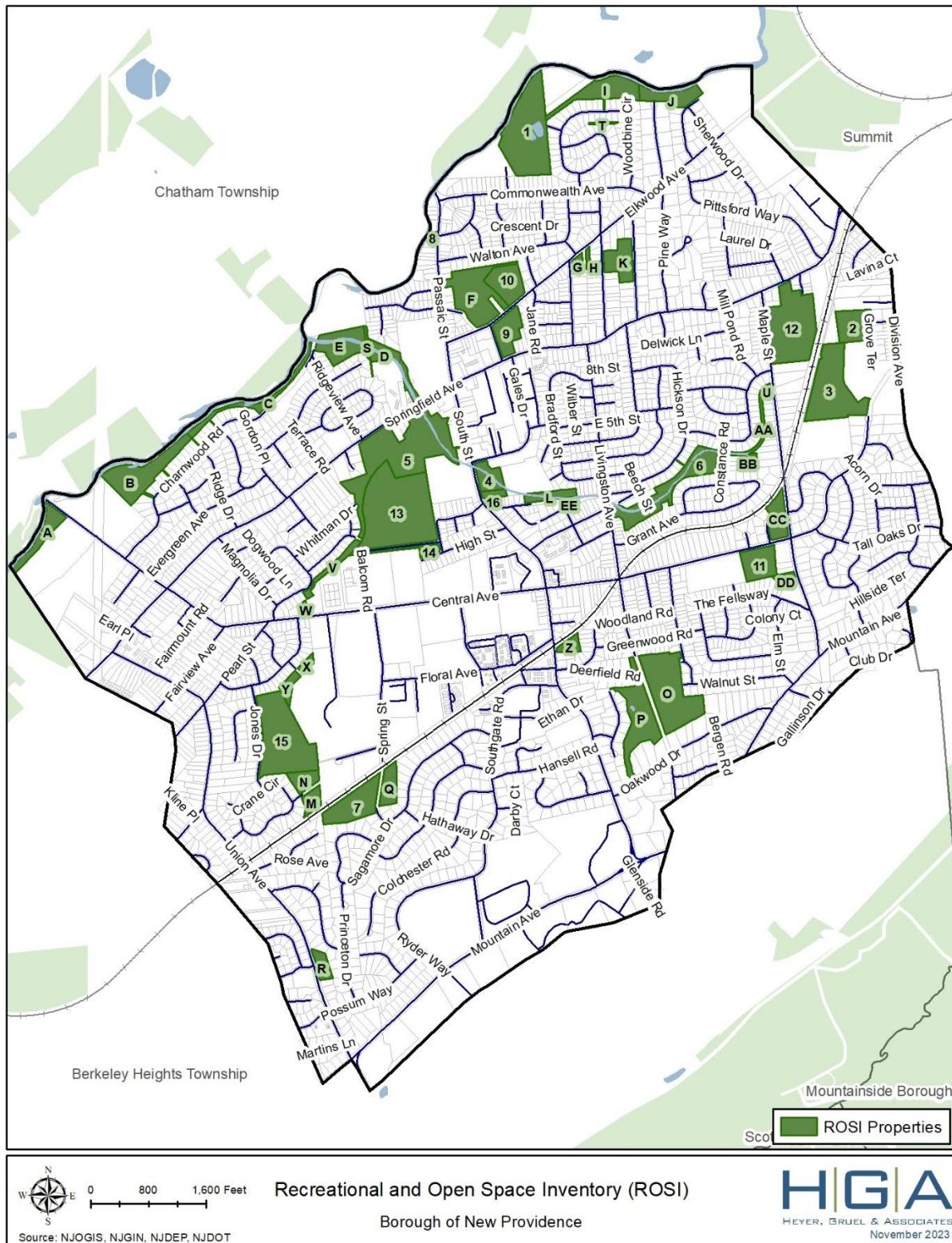
\*Deed records show the properties were acquired for open space purposes, but they are not listed on the most recent declaration of encumbrances.

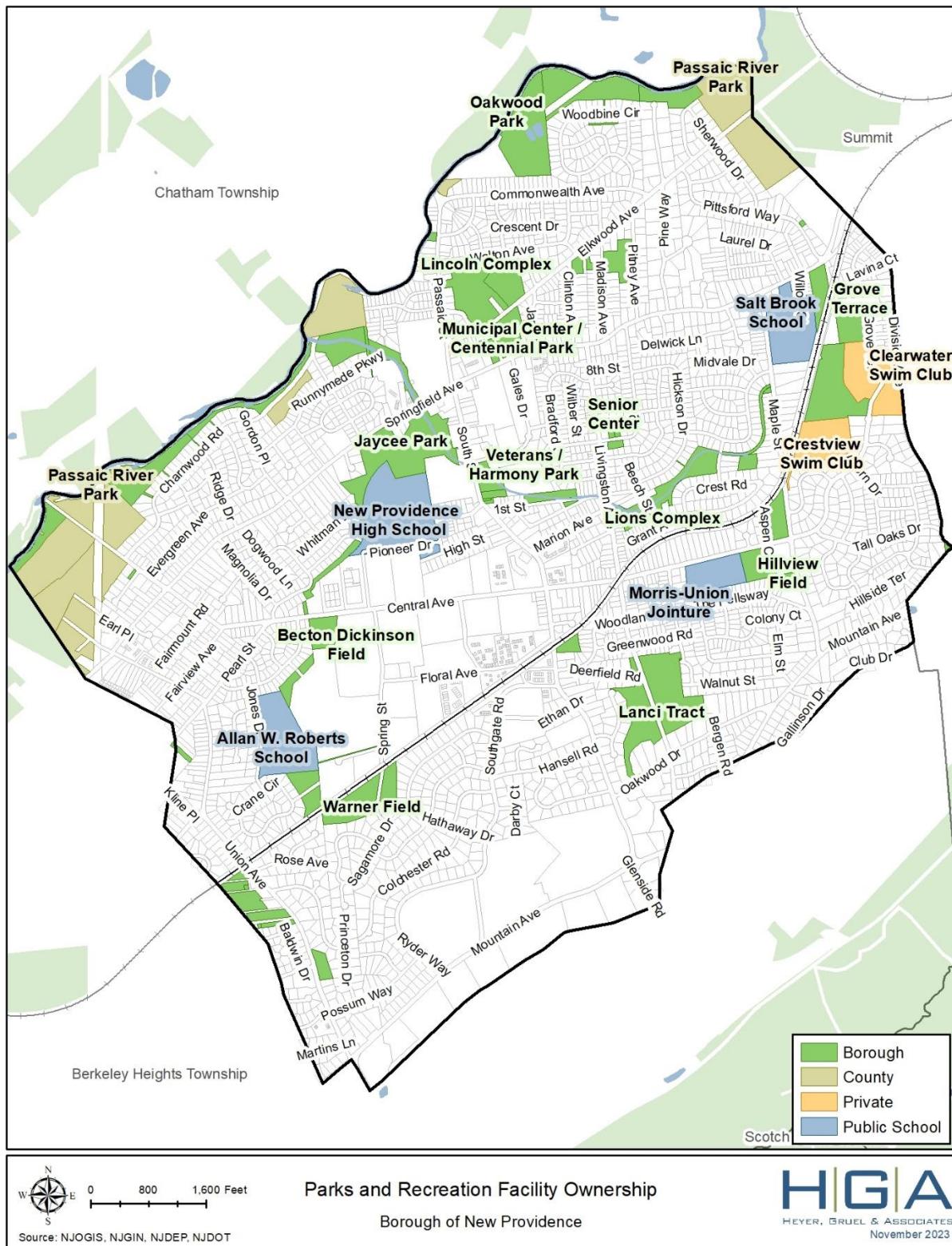
Wholly Undeveloped Lands Held for Recreation and Conservation Purposes						
Key	Municipal Location	Name	Block	Lot	Acres	Funded / Unfunded
A	1060 Central Avenue	Passaic River Park	14	2	3.3	N
B	38 Charnwood Road	Passaic River Park	25	23	8.98	N
C	255 Charnwood Road	Passaic River Park	38	12	3.8	N
D	1341 Springfield Avenue	Salt Brook Park	41	33	3.66	N
E	100 Charnwood Road	Salt Brook park	45	13	5.68	N
F	377 Elkwood Avenue	Public Library	53	4	9.78	N
G	260 Elkwood Avenue	Elkwood-Clinton	63	17	0.798	N
H	76 Madison Avenue	Madison Ave	63	22	0.679	N
I	212 Woodbine Road	Passaic River Park	85	32	5.782	N
J	60 Ashwood Road	Passaic River Park	90	14	3.6	N
K	60 Pitney Avenue	Madison-Pitney	110	14	4.132	N

Borough of New Providence, Union County  
Open Space and Recreation Plan

L	39 First Street	Veteran Memorial Park	163	12	1.984	Y
M	Morris Avenue	Morris Avenue	201	17	1.6	N
N	Morris Avenue	Morris Avenue	210	24	2.2	N
O	350 Livingston Avenue	Lenci Tract - Hickory	283	41	12.57	Y
P	351 Livingston Avenue	Lenci Tract - Johnson	300	1	12.38	Y
Q	18 Warner Place	Warner Field	341	25	2.44	N
R	464 Union Avenue	Bird Sanctuary	373	16	1.68	N
S	98 Runnymede Parkway	Borough of NP	41	36	0.45	N/A
T	Woodbine Circle Rear	Borough of NP	85	34	4.412	N/A
U	101 Maple Street	Borough of NP	136	17	0.608	N/A
V	66 Coddington Avenue	Borough of NP	185	7	1.49	N/A
W	789 Central Avenue	Borough of NP	185	20	0.219	N/A
X	Rear 50 Hawthorne Drive	Borough of NP	210	34	0.641	N/A
Y	Rear 50 Hawthorne Drive	Borough of NP	210	35	1.307	N/A
Z	320 South Street	Borough of NP	232	22	1.16	N/A
AA	40 Constance Road	Borough of NP	244	7	0.76	N/A
BB	Rear 40 Constance Road	Borough of NP	244	26	1.409	N/A
CC	251 Maple Street	Borough of NP	270	31	3.16	N/A
DD	325 Maple Street	Borough of NP	271	42	0.97	N/A
EE	60 Dunlap Street	Borough of NP	239	1	0.205	N/A

Borough of New Providence, Union County  
Open Space and Recreation Plan





#### BOROUGH OWNED FACILITIES

**Centennial Park and Municipal Center Gym**, located at the corner of Elkwood Avenue and Academy Street, are just over 4 acres in size. The municipal center offers a gymnasium, art room and game room adjacent to the landscaped park area that includes a gazebo and benches.

**General Borough Open Space** accounts for 22 properties listed on the Borough's ROSI that measure 61.16 acres in size. These properties are spread throughout the Borough.

**Grove Terrace Field** is located at 1 Grove Terrace and is 4.5 acres in size with a grass soccer field and a baseball field.

**Hillview Complex**, located on Central Avenue adjacent to the Morris-Union Jointure Commission School, is a 4.4-acre park that includes two synthetic turf baseball fields with covered dugouts and one grass field.

**Lincoln Park Complex** at 341 Elkwood Avenue is 4.4 acres in size with two grass baseball fields, one grass field, a basketball court, playground and swings.

**Lions Complex** (5.7 acres) stretches between Livingston Avenue and Constance Road. The recreation complex has one small ballfield and basketball court accessible from Livingston Avenue. Along Constance Road are two small playgrounds with picnic tables and benches.

**The New Providence Community Pool / Tennis / Basketball Court Complex, New Providence Community Garden, Jaycees Park, and Salt Box Museum and Grounds** are all located at 1378 Springfield Avenue on 20.3 acres of land immediately north of New Providence High School. The New Providence Community Pool has two Olympic-sized pools with memberships available to New Providence residents and non-residents. The remainder of the complex is open to the public and consists of eight tennis courts and two basketball courts. The New Providence Community Garden is in the northern portion of the property adjacent to the tennis courts. There are 37 individual beds, which residents can apply to use for the season. Jaycees Park is in the western portion of the property with a playground, benches, and picnic tables. The Salt Box Museum and Grounds is in the northern section of the property along Springfield Avenue.

**New Providence Memorial Library** is located at 377 Elkwood Avenue on a 1.21-acre parcel. The property's multiple memorials, public art and benches can be enjoyed by the public seeking passive recreation.

**Oakwood Park Complex** offers active and passive recreation opportunities at 1 Park Place. The more than 15-acre park has a multi-use synthetic turf field, two baseball fields, basketball court, horseshoe pit, bocce court, playground, canoe launch, and a pond for ice hockey and skating. The passive recreation opportunities include fishing at the pond, walking along the nature trail, and picnicking at the covered picnic area.

**Passaic River Park** is in the northern part of the Borough along the south side of the Passaic River preserving 100 acres. The Passaic River Park consists of 16 vegetated parcels of which Union County owns

13 and the Borough of New Providence owns three. The Passaic River Park (also known as the Passaic River Parkway) stretches through Berkeley Heights, New Providence, and Summit. The entire Park is about 300 acres along the river although there are privately owned sections of the corridor that are not currently preserved.

**Veterans Park / Harmony Park** is 3.27 acres in size and located at 100 South Street. The Harmony Park section offers hands-on, interactive musical instruments and a public arts sculpture. Veterans Park has multiple memorials, picnic tables, and large gazebo. Walking paths connect the two parks and provide access to the parks from South Street and Gales Drive. The acquisition of property at 136 South Street in March, 2021 expanded Harmony Park.

**Warner Field** is located at 14 Warner Place with 6.6 acres of recreation space on which a turf cricket pitch was recently constructed, and 2.4 acres of flood control area.



Lions Park



Jaycees Park



Warner Field



Centennial Park

### BOARD OF EDUCATION FACILITIES

The following Board of Education facilities are included in the Borough's existing inventory.

**Allen W. Roberts Elementary School**, located at 80 Jones Drive on 15 acres, provides active recreation opportunities for the Borough. The school has two baseball fields, a soccer field, gymnasium, playground, and basketball hoops.

**Salt Brook School** (13.4 acres) is located in the eastern portion of the Borough at 40 Maple Street. The school offers a gymnasium, playground, and two baseball fields for the community's use.

**New Providence High School** is located at 35 Pioneer Drive on a 23.6-acre parcel. The school has a football field, track, soccer field, and three baseball diamonds available for use by the school and the public.

### **Publicly Owned Open Space (not listed on ROSI)**

**Allen W. Roberts (AWR) Footpath** is a 0.2-acre pathway connecting the Allen W. Roberts Elementary School to Commerce Drive.

**Ardsley Court Path**, located at the end of Ardsley Court and measuring 0.3 acres in size, provides a walking path between Ardsley Court and Midvale Drive.

**Becton Dickinson Field**, formerly the Bard Field, is located at 730 Central Avenue. The 3.4-acre field includes one soccer field.

**The Morris-Union Jointure Commission School**, located at 340 Central Avenue adjacent to the Hillview Complex is owned by the Morris-Union Jointure Commission. The 7.3-acre property provides recreation opportunities to the public after 6:00 pm on weekdays and all day on weekends. The school has a basketball court, a playground, and benches.

**New Providence DeCorso Community Center / Senior Center**, located at 15 Fourth Street, is on a 0.49-acre property. The property grounds include a garden, bench, and memorial for residents to enjoy.

### **Privately Owned Parcels and Recreational Facilities**

**Clearwater Swim Club** is a private membership-based swim club that operates generally between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The Club is located at 83 Division Avenue in the eastern part of the Borough near the Summit municipal line. The Club has a heated pool, kiddie pool, 4 tennis courts, 2 platform tennis courts, basketball court, shuffleboard and badminton courts, volleyball, and a playground.

**Crestview Swim Club** is a private membership-based swim and tennis club open generally between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The club is located at 200 Maple Street to the southwest of the Clearwater Swim Club. The Club has a pool and tennis facilities.

As of the writing of this Plan, there are no privately owned vacant parcels that are appropriate to consider as public open space. The Borough, however, will continue to reevaluate and be open to opportunities when they arise.

## **Recreation Programs and Leagues**

The New Providence Recreation Department manages the Borough's recreational programs and seeks to provide affordable programs for New Providence residents. The Department offers over 100 programs in a wide range of activities. Programs are offered for both adults and children and include weekly programs for sports, art, sewing, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), dance, and fitness. The Borough also offers summer and school break day camps with various focuses including STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics), theater, art and literature, and sports. The New Providence Recreation Department also partners with the U.S. Sports Institute to provide additional sports programming.

## NEEDS ANALYSIS

### Balanced Land Use Standard

To achieve consistency with state and regional recreation and open space planning, this analysis employs the Balanced Land Use Standard (BLUS) for recreation and open space areas as established in the New Jersey Green Acres Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The BLUS treats land as a finite resource and acknowledges that recreation and open spaces uses are competing with other legitimate uses. Under this standard, municipalities should strive to permanently preserve 3% of their total developed and developable land area as recreation and open space areas. Open Space refers to lands that could be developed for recreation purposes. The BLUS analysis for New Providence was conducted using GIS software.

The Borough of New Providence has approximately 2,019.4 acres of developed and developable land.<sup>1</sup> To meet the requirements of the BLUS, the Borough would need to preserve 60.6 acres as recreation and open space. Currently, just over 350 acres of land in the Borough are preserved, approximately 17.3% of the Borough's developed and developable land. Based on the BLUS, the Borough has preserved over five times the recommended threshold.

Existing Land Use (2022)		
Property Class	Acres	Percentage
Vacant	74.0	3.7%
Residential (1-4 units)	1,172.2	58.0%
Apartments (5+ units)	45.1	2.2%
Commercial	163.4	8.1%
Industrial	108.6	5.4%
Public School	51.7	2.6%
Private School	7.3	0.4%
Public Property	319.6	15.8%
Church & Charitable	32.2	1.6%
Cemeteries & Graveyards	1.4	0.1%
Other Exempt	43.9	2.2%
Total	2,019.4	100.0%
Source: NJOGIS, Tax Assessment Records, all acreages calculated in GIS		

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<sup>1</sup> The acreage was calculated using ArcGIS. The area is the sum of all parcels in the Borough; therefore, the area associated with roadways is excluded.

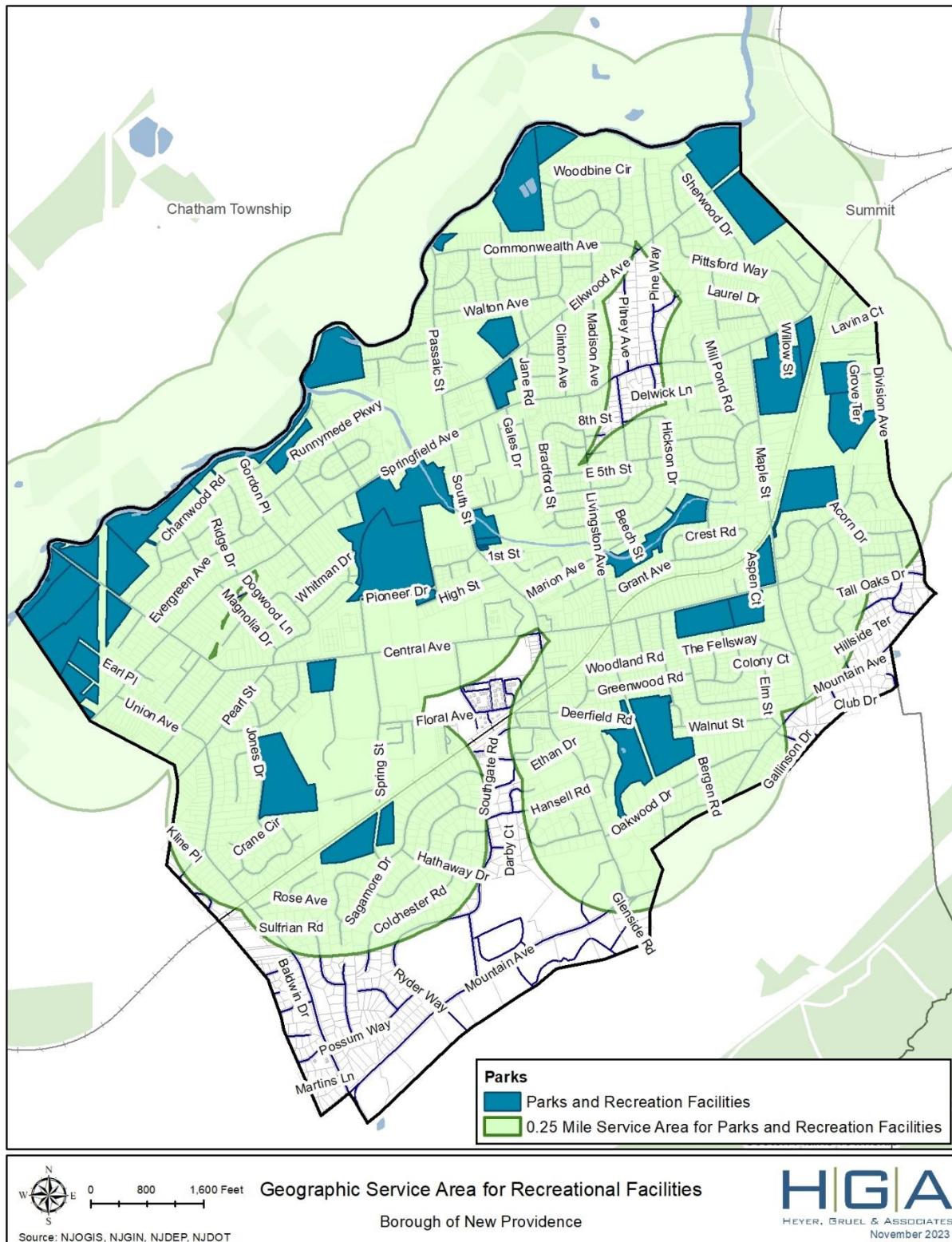
## Geographic Service Area Standard for Recreational Facilities

The geographic service area standard is another framework for examining parkland provisions specific to recreational facilities. This standard utilizes both active and passive recreational opportunities but excludes preserved open space that does not contain improvements.

The methodology currently employed by NJDEP uses a quarter mile as a standard service area for all recreational facilities. In the past, the size of the service area had been scaled based on the type and size of the recreational facility. While it is true that large parks with a variety of recreational offerings are destinations for a broader catchment area, current best practice focuses on access equity using a quarter mile service area. The quarter mile service area represents a short walk or bike ride for most residents and represents equitable access to recreational opportunities.

The Geographic Service Area for Recreational Facilities map on the following page demonstrates that there are several gaps in the parks and recreation service area in New Providence:

- The Murray Hill area in the center of the Borough, which is developed relatively densely with several townhouse developments, the Murray Hill Train Station, and large-scale commercial properties along Central Avenue is a prominent gap in the service area.
- The residential neighborhood generally centered around Pitney Avenue and Pine Way south of Elkwood Avenue in the northeast quadrant of the Borough shows a gap in the service area. It should be noted that there is a tract of preserved open space along Pitney Avenue within this gap; however, it is unimproved and does not currently provide any recreational opportunities.
- Residential areas in the southeast quadrant of the Borough near its borders with Summit and Berkeley Heights. This neighborhood is characterized by narrow, hilly roads without sidewalks.
- The southwest quadrant of the Borough has the largest gap in the service area. There are several Borough-owned vacant parcels on Union Avenue, one on the east side that is on the ROSI and a group of properties on the west side that are not. None of these parcels are developed with recreational facilities. There are substantial lawn areas associated with the Nokia Bell Labs campus along the south side of Mountain Avenue. These areas are undeveloped but are under private ownership and do not provide recreational amenities or public access.



It should be noted that the Watchung Reservation, a nearly 2,000-acre Union County Park is a major regional recreation and conservation amenity just over a mile south of the southern boundary of New Providence. Interstate 78 and the topography of the area limit access to a few locations that are mainly auto oriented. The Reservation includes walking / hiking trails, bridle paths, a historic village, a nature center, and other destinations.

## Facilities for Specific Populations

Understanding how the Borough's population has changed over time can help identify the future park and open space needs of the Borough. Changes in population can influence the types and quantities of certain recreational and open space facilities the Borough will need.

The U.S. Census American Community Survey estimates the Borough's population increased by 1,364 people or 11.3% from 2010 to 2020. The largest increase in population was seen in the 55-to-64 and the 65-to-74 age cohorts, which increased by 5.7% and 4.1%, respectively. The Borough saw a decrease in population only in the 35-to-44 and 45-to-54 age cohorts. The 35-to-44 age cohort decreased by 420 people, or 3.5%. The 45-to-54 age cohort saw a minimal decrease of only 7 people (0.1%). With these changes in population, the Borough's median age increased from 40.1 to 42.1.

	Population by Age, New Providence					
	2010		2020		Change	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total Population	12,018	100%	13,382	100%	1,364	11.3%
Under 5 years	872	7.3%	925	6.9%	53	0.4%
5 to 14 years	1,922	16.0%	2,018	15.1%	96	0.8%
15 to 24 years	1,261	10.5%	1,316	9.8%	55	0.5%
25 to 34 years	947	7.9%	1,179	8.8%	232	1.9%
35 to 44 years	2,243	18.7%	1,823	13.6%	-420	-3.5%
45 to 54 years	1,918	16.0%	1,911	14.3%	-7	-0.1%
55 to 64 years	1,261	10.5%	1,949	14.6%	688	5.7%
65 to 74 years	595	5.0%	1,089	8.1%	494	4.1%
75 to 84 years	696	5.8%	863	6.4%	167	1.4%
85 years +	303	2.5%	309	2.3%	6	0.0%
Median Age	40.4	-	42.1	-	-	-

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates 2006-2010 & 2016-2020

In 2020, 28% of the population was 19 years old or younger compared to 29.3% of the population in 2010. Almost 17% of the population was 65 years old or older in 2020 compared to only 13.3% in 2010. These trends indicate the Borough's population is aging, although almost a third of the population remains under

the age of 20. These changes in population will influence the types of open space facilities the Borough pursues in the future.

#### SENIOR FRIENDLY FACILITIES

In 2020, the community group called New Providence Our Community For All collected 812 responses to a 15-minute survey open to all New Providence's residents of all ages. The outcome of their survey concluded that generally, adults in New Providence would like to see mechanisms that allow people to age in place, additional resources for affordable homes, better connections to local volunteer opportunities, local public activities geared toward adults over the age of 55, and local public transportation options.

The concept of aging in place goes beyond changes that can be made to one's home to make it more accessible. Instead, entire communities contribute to the ability for an individual to age in their home and in their hometown. Parks and recreational opportunities should be available to all ages and abilities. Providing for "senior friendly" design and programming creates comfortable and accessible spaces where people feel a sense of attachment to the community, engaging in social and recreational activities.

Parks and open spaces have also been shown to provide health benefits, including reducing stress levels, which improves cognitive function and performance in addition to providing places for light exercise which can slow the aging process.

Senior friendly facilities and amenities include but are not limited to:

- Parks that incorporate natural elements into the design
- Clean spacious restrooms
- Comfortable benches with backrests, arm rests, and shaped to support the back and waist
- Sufficient space around benches for those with walkers or wheelchairs
- Picnic tables designed for the comfort of seniors
- Location of rest areas under trees, canopies or gazebos to provide shade
- Walking paths marked with distance travelled
- Paths and trails be made of rubbery non-slip materials, have handrails, provide adequate lighting, and be landscaped in a way to provide clear visibility
- Low-impact exercise machines and/or stations that are easily accessible
- Providing recreational programs such as outdoor yoga classes or Tai-Chi
- Safe, clean, and quiet environment

(Source: "Placemaking for an Aging Population: Guidelines for Senior-Friendly Parks" published by the UCLA Complete Streets Initiative, Luskin School of Public Affairs, and Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies. June 2014.)

The New Providence DeCorso Community Center / Senior Center offers a variety of programs to support the Borough's senior population, organized by the New Providence Community Activities/Recreation staff. These include but are not limited to:

- Shuttles to Shop Rite and Livingston Mall
- Zumba Classes
- Club Meetings
- Tai Chi
- Language classes
- Bingo and games
- Balancing & Conditioning Exercise Class
- Nutrition classes
- AARP Tax Aid

In June 2021, the Borough of New Providence joined the AARP Age-Friendly Network. The Borough has a livability rating of 56, scoring well in categories such as access to life, work, and play as well as access and quality of health care.

#### COMPLETELY INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUNDS

In 2018, the bill known as "Jake's Law" was signed into law, incentivizing the construction of inclusive playgrounds for children all abilities. The intent is to development all-inclusive playgrounds that include accessible features that can accommodate any child. Completely Inclusive Playgrounds (CIP) are designed to be accessible for either younger children between two and five years of age or older children between five and twelve years of age. CIP are designed to be accessible to users of all abilities and are required to comply with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) regulations.

Potential features of CIP include transfer platforms, full-body positioning support swings, sensory-friendly amenities, soft safety surfaces, and full wheelchair accessibility. The Borough plans to pursue newly available funding through Green Acres for CIP improvements, including new fencing, accessibility improvements, new benches, new lighting, and more at Oakwood Park.

## RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Linear Recreation and Open Space Facilities

The Passaic River runs along the northern border of New Providence. A substantial portion of the corridor within New Providence is preserved land owned by either Union County or the Borough. The publicly owned corridor has a gap along the west side of Passaic Street and behind the residential properties fronting on Brook Road, Charnwood Road, and Edward Court. A linear public access easement, or potential future property acquisition could fill the gap that exists in the corridor.

Additional linear recreation and open space opportunities may exist along the Salt Brook and its branches, which extend through the central portion of the Borough. Portions of the streams have been channelized, while others remain in a natural state. There may be opportunities to enhance walking and passive recreation facilities and/or green infrastructure and flood storage along both the channelized and natural portions of the riparian areas.

### Supporting Conservation Objectives

#### WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION

Protection of public and private water-supply resources is an important conservation objective. Within the borders of New Providence, there are no public community water wells, nor any surface sources of water. There is one Public Non-Community Well Head associated with the Crestview Swim and Tennis Club. NJDEP defines a Public Non-Community Well Head as a “public supply well used by individuals other than year-round residents for at least sixty days of the year”, which is consistent with the seasonal use of the Club. The Protection Area (WHPA) associated with the Well Head is an area that delineates the horizontal extent of groundwater captured by a well pumping at a specific rate over two-, five-, and twelve-year periods of time for unconfined wells. Approximately 300 acres of the northeast section of the Borough fall within the widest extent of the WHPA.

#### WILDLIFE PROTECTION

The NJDEP developed the Landscape Project to guide strategic wildlife habitat conservation to protect the biological diversity in the state by maintaining and enhancing imperiled wildlife populations within healthy, functioning ecosystems. The Landscape Project is a pro-active, ecosystem-level approach for the long-term protection of imperiled species and their important habitats throughout the State.

The Landscape Project ranks habitats based upon wildlife sightings, and land use/land-cover data which includes vegetation and habitat type.

Rank 1 is assigned to species-specific habitat patches that meet habitat specific suitability requirements such as minimum size or core area criteria for endangered, threatened or special concern wildlife species, but that do not intersect with any confirmed occurrences of such species. Rank 1 habitat patches without

documented occurrences are not necessarily absent of imperiled or special concern species. Patches with a lack of documented occurrences may not have been systematically surveyed. Thus, the Rank 1 designation is used for planning purposes, such as targeting areas for future wildlife surveys. Rank 1 habitats are found throughout the Borough along its waterways.

Rank 2 is assigned to species-specific habitat patches containing one or more occurrences of species considered to be species of special concern. Species of special concern are nongame wildlife species that warrants special attention by the Department because of inherent vulnerability to environmental deterioration or habitat modification that would result in it becoming threatened if conditions surrounding the species begin or continue to deteriorate. Factors that can lead to classification as special concern include, but are not limited to, species rarity in the State, highly specialized food and/or habitat requirements, low reproductive rate, isolated populations of the species within the State and/or other characteristics that make the species particularly susceptible to environmental or habitat changes. This category includes a species that meets the foregoing criteria and for which there is little understanding of its current population status in the State. Species determined to be "special concern" are so-designated at N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.17

*Species of Special Concern found within New Providence's Rank 2 habitat include the Great Blue Heron.*

Rank 3 is assigned to species-specific patches containing one or more occurrences of State threatened species. State threatened species are defined as an indigenous nongame wildlife species of New Jersey designated pursuant to the Endangered and Nongame Species Conservation Act, N.J.S.A.23:2A et. seq., and its implementing rules, N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.17, as most recently amended. Threatened species are species that may become endangered if conditions surrounding them begin or continue to deteriorate. There are no Rank 3 habitats within the Borough.

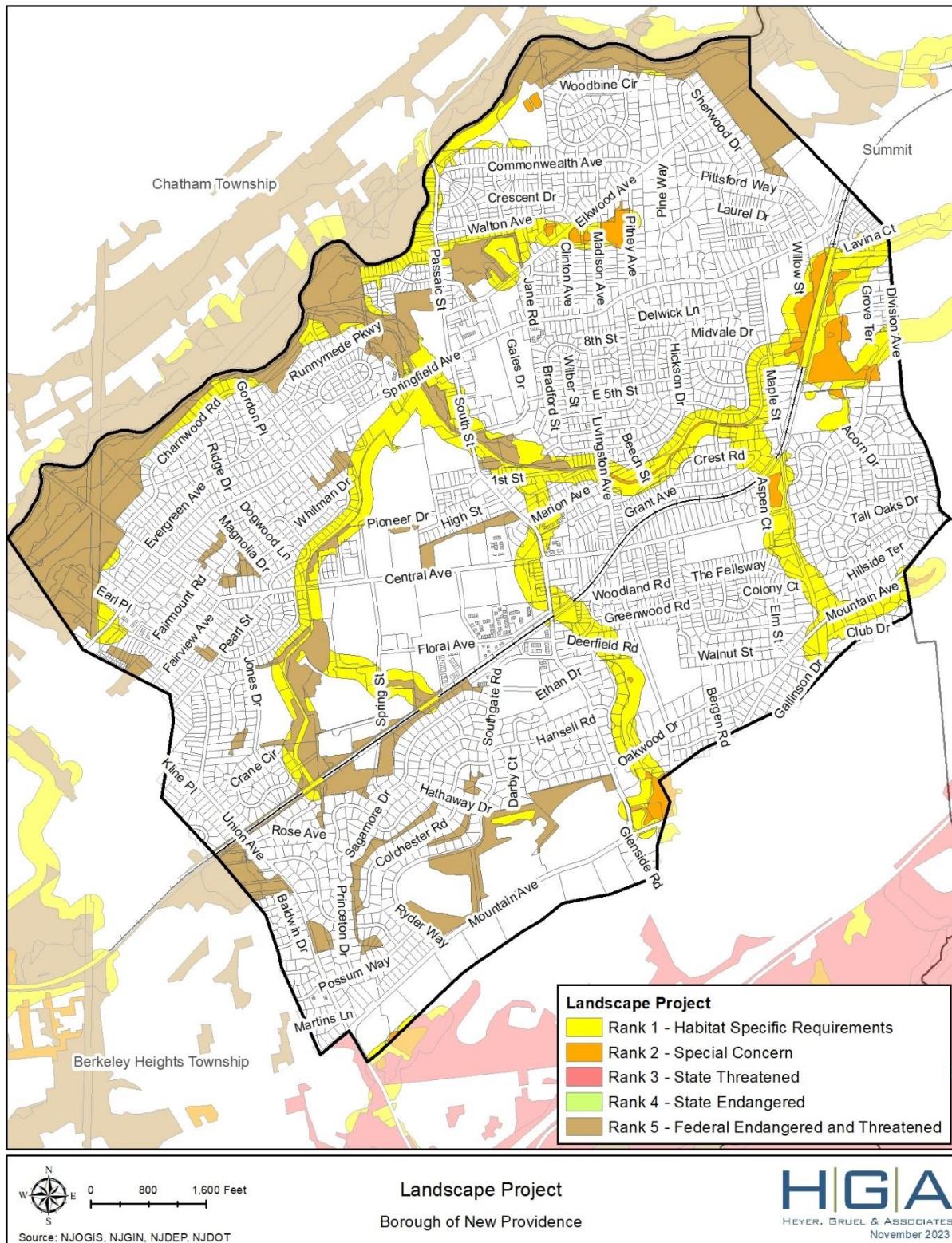
Rank 4 is assigned to species-specific habitat patches with one or more occurrences of State endangered species. State Endangered species are species included on the list of endangered species at N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.13 and any species or subspecies of wildlife appearing on any Federal endangered species list. The Endangered and Nongame Species Conservation Act (N.J.S.A. 23:2A et seq.) defines an endangered species (with respect to wildlife) to be a species or subspecies of wildlife whose prospects for survival or recruitment are in jeopardy or are likely within the foreseeable future to become so due to any of the following factors: (1) the destruction, drastic modification, or severe curtailment of its habitat, or (2) its over-utilization for scientific, commercial or sporting purposes, or (3) the effect on it of disease, pollution, or predation, or (4) other natural or manmade factors affecting its prospects of survival or recruitment within the State, or (5) any combination of the foregoing factors. The term shall also be deemed to include any species or subspecies of wildlife appearing on any Federal endangered species list. No Rank 4 habitats are found within the Borough.

Rank 5 is assigned to species-specific habitat patches containing one or more occurrences of wildlife listed as endangered and threatened pursuant to the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973. There are Rank 5 habitats throughout the Borough.

The Indiana Bat, a Federally Listed Endangered Species and New Jersey Listed Endangered Species is found within the Rank 5 habitats in the Borough. Additional species found within New Providence's Rank 5 habitat include the following:

- Bald Eagle – NJ Endangered Species
- Wood Thrush – Species of Special Concern in NJ
- Great Blue Heron – Species of Special Concern in NJ
- Eastern Box Turtle – Species of Special Concern in NJ

The SCORP prioritizes land conservation projects that support endangered species habitat.



## Resilience and Sustainability

Since the Borough's last OSRP, there have been several substantial flood events that impacted the Borough and its residents and the state as a whole. Recent amendments to the Municipal Land Use Law mandate a consideration of climate change impacts and state planning efforts over the past several years have been looking at all aspects of development and preservation in the state through the lens of sustainability and resiliency. There is a natural intersection between the preservation of open space and promoting resiliency and sustainability. Parks and open space can provide vegetation in densely developed areas that is beneficial for air quality, stormwater management, and offsetting the impacts of the urban heat island effect. In riverine areas, protecting natural riparian areas has the benefit of keeping development out of harm's way and enhancing flood storage to limit the impacts of flooding throughout the community.

In New Providence, the Passaic River and Salt Brook are potential sources of flood hazard along which there exists substantial open space. Acquisition of additional open space and using green infrastructure to enhance flood storage in developed areas along these riparian corridors has the twin benefits of broadening the open space network and making the Borough more resilient to flooding.

Outside the riparian areas, there may be opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure and other low impact development techniques, renewable energy, and nature-based solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Borough of New Providence, Union County  
Open Space and Recreation Plan



**H|G|A**  
HEYER, GRUEL & ASSOCIATES  
November 2023

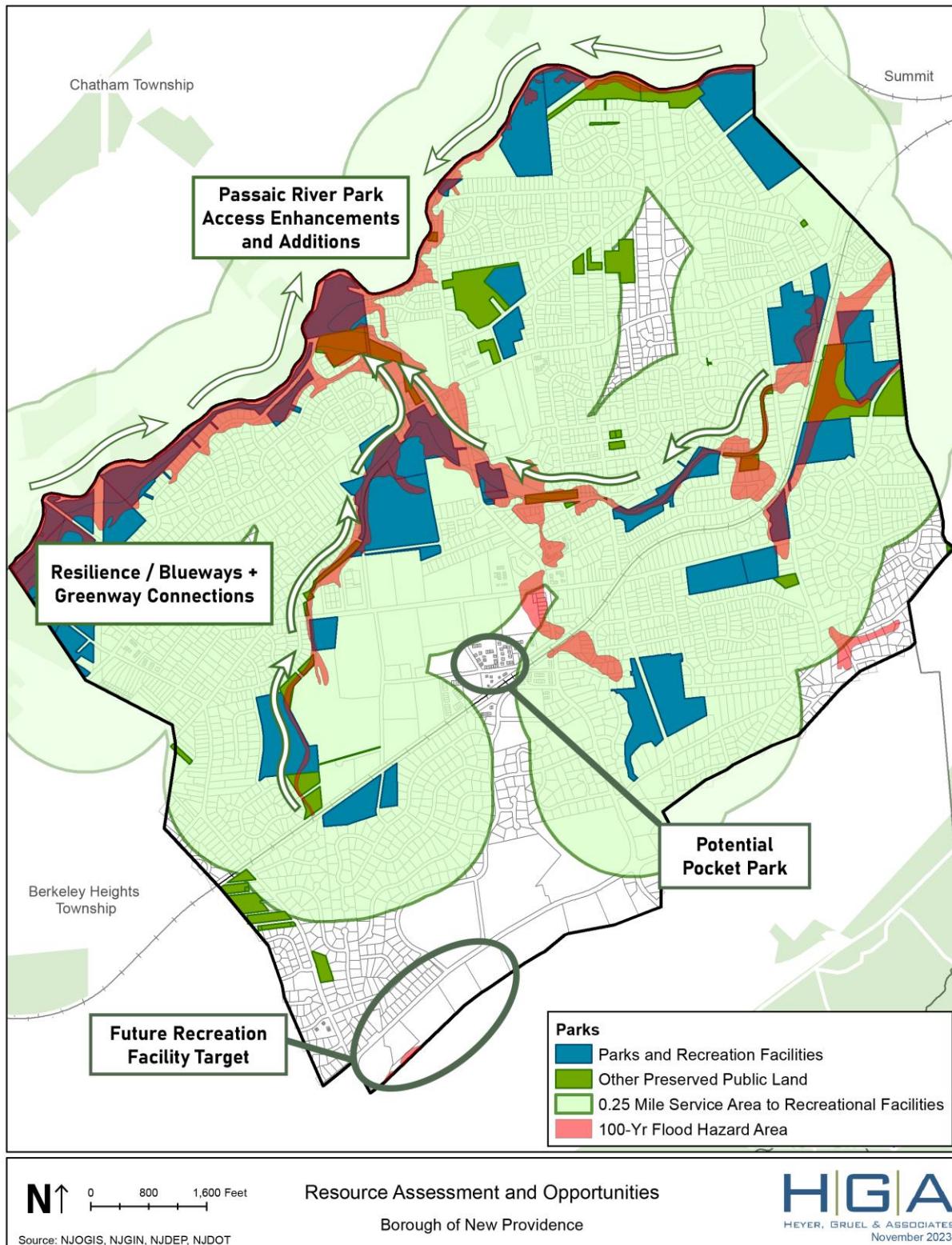
## Public Access to Inland Waters

The Passaic River runs along the northern border of the Borough. The parcels for the Passaic River Park are located along the river and are owned by Union County or the Borough. It is recommended the Borough work alongside the County to create a complete linkage along the River and to incorporate public walkways and trails in the Passaic River Park to provide access to the Passaic River.

## Strategic Plan

Future property acquisition will be driven by the availability of funds, both in the municipal open space trust fund and the state Green Acres program. The Borough should monitor other funding sources and pursue programs for which it may be eligible. Since there is limited vacant and developable land remaining in New Providence, the Borough should work with private property owners and the development community to integrate useful open space and recreational amenities into future development and redevelopment projects. When resources are available for acquisition, the following areas should be prioritized:

1. Acquisition and/or development of a recreational facility in the southern portion of the Borough near Union Avenue and Mountain Avenue.
2. Creation of a pocket park or other small recreational facility in the Murray Hill area generally bound by the train station, Central Avenue, Spring Street, and South Street.
3. Acquire property and/or easements to enhance flood storage and resilience along the Salt Brook and its branches.
4. Work with Union County to acquire property and/or easements along the Passaic River to create a complete, publicly accessible corridor through New Providence.
5. Pursue the recommended recreation facility development actions set forth in this Plan.
6. Develop an invasive species management plan to prevent both developed and undeveloped, Borough-owned open space from being overrun with invasive flora and fauna.



## RECOMMENDED RECREATION FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

### **Becton Dickinson (aka Bard) Field (Block 210 Lot 32)**

This site is currently developed with one soccer field. The Borough can pursue improvements, including fencing surrounding the site, maintenance of the existing vegetation, possibly adding synthetic turf. Other potential considerations include the addition of appropriate lighting that will not negatively impact the residential neighbors to the west as well as considerations to address the lack of parking for the field.

### **Grove Terrace (Block 121 Lot 32)**

Grove Terrace consists of a soccer field and baseball field. Renovations were undertaken in 2021-2022, but further enhancements to the driveway entrance to the facility are recommended.

### **Lincoln Complex (Block 53 Lot 25)**

The Lincoln Complex has two small ball fields, a grass field, a basketball court, and a playground. The Borough can pursue brook bank stabilization at the rear of the facility. Other green infrastructure improvements and resilience enhancements may be considered.

### **Lions Complex (Block 241 Lot 49)**

The Lions Complex has a ballfield, basketball court, and two playgrounds. The Borough received funding in 2022 from the Union County Kids Recreation Trust Fund for upgrades and equipment. An accessible patio connection from the playground to the bathrooms and other improvements are planned to be installed in Spring 2024. Renovations to the ballfield are also anticipated.

### **Municipal Tennis / Pool / Basketball Court Complex (Block 171, Lot 13)**

Improvements are planned to the tennis courts area. The Borough received funding in 2023 from the Union County Kids Recreation Trust Fund to install a dedicated pickleball court and to stripe an existing tennis court to create courts that can be used for either tennis or pickleball. As those improvements are undertaken, it will be important to balance the needs of both tennis and pickleball users and to pursue additional facilities as needed. Improvements to the parking lot lighting throughout the complex may also be appropriate.

### **Oakwood Park (Block 76, Lot 35)**

Extensive renovations were undertaken from 2016-2018 to the athletic field portion of the complex. Additional renovations are planned for the playground to install new fencing, accessibility improvements, new lighting, and other measures to create a Completely Inclusive Playground in accordance with Jake's Law. The Borough will pursue Green Acres funds in the 2024 grant round for the improvements.

## Warner Place (Block 341 Lot 25)

Warner Place is located at 14 Warner Place adjacent to the railroad tracks and surrounded by trees. A turf cricket pitch was recently installed. Long-term, there is a desire to add a playground and make other enhancements to the facility.

## ACTION PLAN

The action plan provides specific short-, medium-, and long-term tasks that will advance the Borough's open space and recreation objectives. Short-term objectives should be expected to commence immediately upon adoption of the OSRP and be completed within a year. Medium-term and long-term objectives will take place over the course of a year or more and will largely depend on the availability of funding, either through dedicated municipal sources or outside grants. The on-going actions should be conducted on a rolling basis with at least an annual review that outlines accomplishments, updates inventories and work plans, and summarizes program participation and facility usage.

### Short-Term

- Adopt the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update as part of the Master Plan.
- Expand program offerings through the Borough's Recreation Department.
- Complete the Lions Park improvements that were funded through the 2022 Union County Kids Recreation Trust Fund award.
- Complete the pickleball court improvements at the Municipal Tennis Complex that were funded through the 2023 Union County Kids Recreation Trust Fund Award.
- Complete the repaving of the Municipal Walking Path located at the Municipal Tennis Complex that was funded in 2021 by the Local Recreation Improvement Grant (LRIG).
- Pursue Green Acres grant funding in the 2024 round for the development of a Completely Inclusive Playground at Oakwood Park as defined by Jake's law.

### Medium-Term

- Analyze existing facilities and identify improvements and modifications to enhance accessibility for the Borough's aging residents.
- Work with neighboring municipalities to coordinate pathway/trail initiatives along the Passaic River.
- Incorporate green infrastructure into developed recreation facilities and enhance flood storage in open space and recreational facilities within the flood hazard area.
- Develop a playground at Warner Place.

## Long-Term

- Coordinate the incorporation of open space and recreational facilities into potential future private development efforts, including but not limited to the Murray Hill neighborhood and the open space along the south side of Mountain Avenue at the Nokia Bell Labs campus, both of which would fill existing gaps in the recreation service area.
- Pursue acquisition of additional properties for open space, recreation, and flood resilience purposes.

## On-Going

- Maintain an inventory of existing facilities and necessary improvements.
- Monitor facility and recreational program usage to understand resident needs, desires, and trends. Most notably, ensuring that tennis and pickleball players are afforded equitable court access.

## PARCEL DATA TABLES

### Borough Owned Properties not Listed on the ROSI

Block	Lot	Class	Location	Owner	Acres (GIS)	Acres (Tax)	Park
12	29	15C	8 DELAWARE AVE	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.14	0.15	-
103	17	15C	43 PITTSFORD WAY	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.12	0.12	-
134	55	15C	END OF ARDSLEY CT	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.03	0.03	Ardsley Court Path
142	13	15C	15 FOURTH STREET	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.49	0.49	New Providence Senior Citizen Center
143	8	15C	20 FOURTH ST	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.18	0.18	-
143	9	15C	14 FOURTH ST	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.18	0.18	-
204	25	15C	160 PEARL ST	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.50	0.44	-
210	20.01	15C	730 CENTRAL AVE	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	3.41	3.42	Becton Dickinson Field
210	22	15C	47 COMMERCE DR	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.20	0.21	AWR Footpath
236	15	15C	175 LIVINGSTON AVE	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.01	0.02	-
263	3	15C	1 MOUNTAIN AVENUE	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.08	0.10	New Providence Sign
283	29	15C	39 HICKORY PL	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.02	0.02	-
362	1	15C	335 UNION AVE	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.70	0.70	-
363	1	15C	1 CHESTNUT ST	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.93	1.01	-
363	2	15C	3 CHESTNUT ST	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.08	0.07	-
365	1	15C	2 CHESTNUT ST	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	2.40	2.42	-
366	2	15C	385 UNION AVE	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	1.56	1.56	-
372	7	15C	395 UNION AVE	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.08	0.06	-
372	8	15C	2 SPRUCE ST	BOROUGH OF NEW PROVIDENCE	0.57	0.59	-
372	13	15C	4 SPRUCE ST	NEW PROVIDENCE BOROUGH OF	0.07	0.07	-

## County-Owned Properties

Block	Lot	Property Class	Location	Owner	Acres (GIS)	Acres (Tax)	Park
10	2	15C	1819 SPRINGFIELD AVE	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	0.32	0.47	Passaic River Park
10	6	15C	UNION AVE	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	3.56	3.36	Passaic River Park
11	6	15C	40 EARL PL	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	3.10	3.13	Passaic River Park
13	1	15C	1010 CENTRAL AVE	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	3.01	3.22	Passaic River Park
13	13	15C	45 EARL PL	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	10.01	11.10	Passaic River Park
14	1	15C	1050 CENTRAL AVE	COUNTY OF UNION - ADMIN. BLDG.	12.72	14.87	Passaic River Park
14	3	15C	REAR 1060 CENTRAL AVE	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	0.04	0.04	Passaic River Park
25	25	15C	1015 CENTRAL AVE	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	7.23	7.44	Passaic River Park
25	30	15C	CENTRAL AVE	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	3.73	4.02	Passaic River Park
35	14	15C	185 RUNNYMEDE PKWY	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	2.93	3.16	Passaic River Park
45	1	15C	101 CHARNWOOD RD	COUNTY OF UNION ADMIN BLDG	11.13	11.11	Passaic River Park
92	6	15C	35 ELKWOOD AVE	COUNTY OF UNION - ADMIN. BLDG.	10.71	11.10	Passaic River Park
103	25	15C	36 ELKWOOD AVE	DIV OF PARKS & REC- UNION CO ADMIN	11.35	11.42	Passaic River Park

## Private Facilities

Block	Lot	Property Class	Location	Owner	Acres (GIS)	Acres (Tax)	Facility
271	46.01	15B	340 CENTRAL AVE	MORRIS-UNION JOINTURE COMMISSION	7.30	7.31	Morris-Union Juncture Commission School (Playground)
123	1	1	99 DIVISION AVE	CLEARWATER CLUB CORP	3.92	3.77	Clearwater Swim Club
124	1	4A	83 DIVISION AVE	CLEARWATER CLUB CORP	8.54	8.74	Clearwater Swim Club
250	16	4A	200 MAPLE ST	CRESTVIEW CLUB CORP	9.54	10.00	Crestview Swim & Tennis Club