



Press Release

Governor Murphy Recommends \$1.45 Million to Verona for Everett Field and Open Space Purchase

Verona, NJ
May 2, 2024

In honor of Earth Week, Governor Murphy announced Verona as one of the recipients of funding recommendations for the Green Acres Program. The Governor's recommended funding package, the highest in 15 years, highlights the administration's dedication to community and inclusive recreation. Verona has been recommended for the highest possible funding for municipalities, receiving \$700,000 to assist in reimbursing the Township for the Mt. Prospect land acquisition.

Governor Murphy stated, "New Jersey is poised to make a historically significant investment in its parks and the people who depend on them for recreation, open space, and a sense of community for all. The grants and loans proposed for these projects will provide opportunities for residents and visitors alike - across the Garden State - to engage in healthy activities, enjoy the outdoors, and spend quality family time together."

The property located on Mt. Prospect Avenue, adjacent to the Eagle Rock Reservation nature preserve, adds 14 acres to the 400-acre preserve and is one of the last remaining large tracts of land in Verona Township. This land includes mature deciduous trees and a small area of riverine wetlands, serving as the headwaters to the Peckman River. With an informal trail leading to the Reservation's red trail, this property offers great hiking and bird watching opportunities for Verona residents.

In addition, Verona has also been awarded \$750,000 in grant funds to construct an all-inclusive playground and other improvements to Everett Field as part of a field reconstruction project. This grant will significantly reduce Verona's portion of the overall project cost. This funding will not only help maintain a legacy in Verona, it will greatly improve safety, ensure compliance with ADA requirements, and add an inclusive playground, enhancing the recreational opportunities for Verona residents.

The Verona administration remains committed to enhancing Township facilities with minimal cost impact to residents. At Everett Field alone, two more grant applications are currently awaiting final decisions. Murphy's funding recommendations will move forward to the independent Garden State Preservation Trust for review, approval, and submission to the New Jersey Legislature for appropriation.

ABOUT GREEN ACRES

New Jersey's Green Acres program was created in 1961 to meet the state's growing recreation and conservation needs. Together with public and private partners, Green Acres has protected nearly 725,000 acres of open space and provided hundreds of outdoor recreational facilities in communities around the state. To date, the total acreage of protected open space and farmland across New Jersey exceeds 1.5 million acres.

Green Acres projects create jobs and stimulate economic development by making communities more attractive places to live and work, consequently boosting civic pride. They also improve air and water quality, providing residents with a better quality of life.

The DEP is a partner in the Governor's Population Health Challenge, which calls on state agencies to promote public health through their policies. Studies have found that investments in parks and recreational amenities positively impact health and fitness, resulting in less strain on the health-care system. Studies also demonstrate that people are likely to be more physically active if they live close to parks and recreational facilities.

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