



MONMOUTH COUNTY MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE GRANT PROGRAMS



Workshop

Wednesday, June 17, 2026





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

PROGRAM HISTORY

- The annual, competitive, matching grant program is funded by the County Open Space Trust Fund.
- In 2023 the Board of County Commissioners increased the amount of allocated funds to \$6 million per year to this program.
- The program is administered on behalf of the Commissioners by the staff of the Monmouth County Park System.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

PROGRAM HISTORY

- Since the inception in 2003:
 - 370 grants have been awarded
 - 51 of the County's 53 towns have been awarded more than \$66.4 million for local park acquisition and development projects.
- Funds up to 50% of project costs
- 75% in Urban Aid Communities
- Limited to \$500,000 per project.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

PURPOSE

- Ensure municipalities have the resources they need to make necessary park improvements on municipally owned or controlled park areas.

The program is a competitive program where Municipalities submit applications for proposed projects.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop or redevelop land to expand recreational opportunities or preserve historic resources





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

PROGRAM GOALS

- Improve land for parks and recreation purposes.
- Create new recreational facilities, expansion, or improvement of existing recreational opportunities, preservation of historic resources in parks, and new or innovative approaches to providing local access to open spaces or recreational activities.
- Additional priority will be given to State-designated Urban Aid Communities and Overburdened Communities.

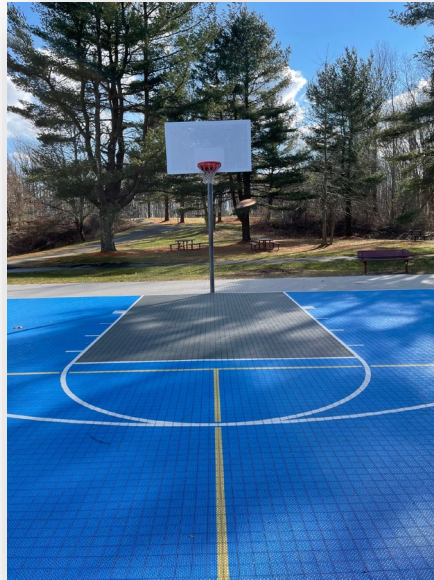




Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Monmouth County municipalities
- Municipalities are encouraged to form partnerships with other public or non-profit organizations to strengthen and enhance project proposals.
- The Board of County Commissioners enters into grant agreements with municipalities only.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

ANNUAL SCHEDULE

- April - Application packages sent to Mayors, Municipal Administrators & Clerks
- July - Applications due (2026 deadline is July 9)
- September - Funding recommendations to County Commissioners
- October - County Commissioners announce selected projects
- June - Environmental Reports (PASI) must be on-file and Grant Agreements executed.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- All projects must be for park, recreation, and open space purposes, including historic preservation.
- Building new facilities and improving existing facilities through demolition, renovation, and/or stabilization.
- All project sites must be owned by the applicant municipality, or the municipality must hold a long-term lease or other instrument extending for substantially 25 years beyond the grant award.
- Fees for use of funded facilities are permissible.
- Degree of public access will also be considered.
- A deed of open space easement from the applicant municipality to the County restricting the use of the project site to these purposes will be required as a condition of award. Third party agreements may apply for long-term leases, etc.



Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

LESSONS LEARNED – APPLICATIONS

- ***Have a local champion***
- ***Plan for the next 10 years***
- ***Phasing, Phasing, Phasing – Don't get in over your head***
- ***Buy-in from the beginning*** – Major project changes are not permitted, so project buy-in from the beginning is important.
- ***Bring everyone to the table***

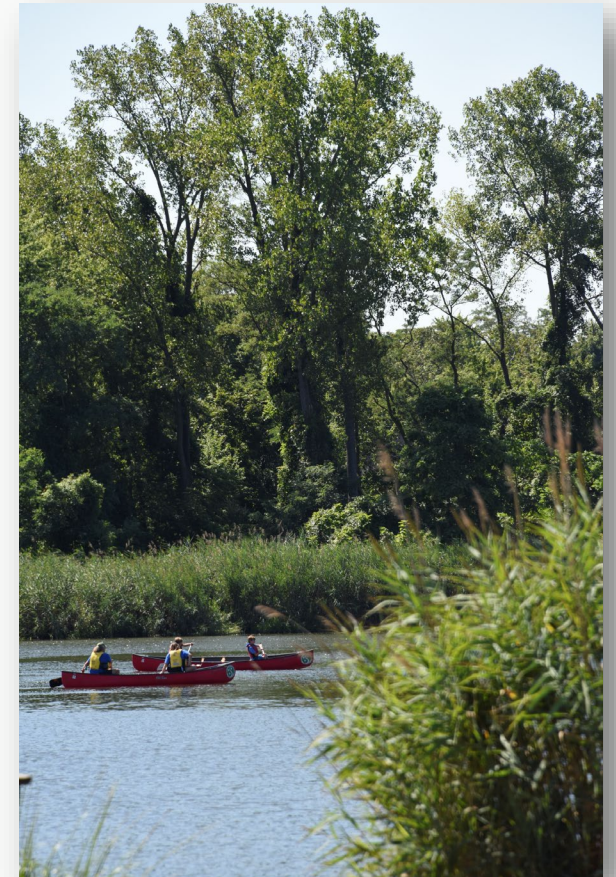




Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

LESSONS LEARNED – APPLICATIONS

- ***Think regionally, act locally***
- ***Get creative***
- ***Don't wait*** – The grant application process requires a noticed public hearing and governing body resolutions. An application without a public hearing or municipal resolution are NOT eligible.
- ***Bigger isn't always better***
- ***Get to know us*** – We encourage pre-application meetings. We are available to help with all aspects of the application process.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

LESSONS LEARNED – APPLICATIONS

Common Mistakes in the Application

- ***Missing information*** - Use the application checklist to ensure that you are submitting a complete application.
- ***Inconsistencies between cover page, narrative, project budget, and the authorizing resolution*** - Review the application components for consistency; pay particular attention to block and lot numbers and budget figures. The grant request is rounded to the nearest \$1,000.
- ***Designation of a municipal contact person unable to perform the function*** – A contact person who works regular business hours within the municipal offices.
- ***Application narrative does not follow prescribed outline*** – A well-organized application should be responsive to the application requirements and project evaluation criteria.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

LESSONS LEARNED – APPLICATIONS

Common Mistakes in the Application

- ***Improper project site definition*** - The project site is the entire park. All information provided in the application and in the hearing notice must include the entire park.
- ***Ineligible costs in the project budget*** - Ineligible costs include operational/maintenance costs, equipment, staff time, soft costs and in-kind services.
- ***Faulty public notice or hearing process*** - A public hearing with proper public notice must be completed prior to the filing of the application.
- ***Property not on or eligible for the Recreation and Open Space Inventory or ROSI*** - Funded properties must be used for public park, recreation, and open space purposes only. An easement restricting its use to open space/recreation is a condition of award.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

OVERALL PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Development of new facilities that serve the region
- Development of new facilities that serve the local population
- Expansion of existing facilities that serve the region
- Expansion of existing facilities that serve the local population
- Rehabilitation/redevelopment of existing facilities
- Deferred maintenance





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

ADDITIONAL PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

- ***Project Viability*** – Factors indicating that the municipality is committed to the project and that it is viable.
- ***Past Performance*** - Record of completion of projects
- ***Development Pressure*** – Presence of a threat to natural resources or severe constraints on the municipality's ability to meet open space and recreation needs due to development pressures.
- ***Strength of Local Program*** – Municipal investment in and commitment to the local parks, recreation, and open space program.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

ADDITIONAL PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

- ***Relationship to Other Planning Efforts and Community Needs*** – Projects included in adopted local plans and/or address documented needs.
- ***Community Support*** – Expression of public support through testimony at the public hearing or letters, participation of partners and outside funding support.
- ***Design*** – Sensitivity to and enhancement of special natural, cultural, and historic features on the site and compatibility with adjacent land uses.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

LESSONS LEARNED – PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- **Designate an in-house project manager** – The inclination is to rely on consultants for project management, but consultants change. Someone in the municipality should be involved in managing the project as well.
- **Budget in the real world and go to bid ASAP** – Your project scope will be based on your proposed budget. Bids that come in over your budget are not grounds for project scope amendments. Materials rarely become less expensive. Go to bid as soon as the grant agreement is executed.
- **If your PASI shows AOCs, address them ASAP** – All AOCs must be addressed prior to grant close-out.
- **Stay in contact with us** – If you fall behind, let us know and we can grant project extensions.





Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

LESSONS LEARNED – GRANT CLOSE OUT

- ***Plan for close-out when you get your award*** – Start a project file and keep all project documentation together including project bids, resolutions, contracts, vouchers, purchase orders, change orders, construction plans, permits, deeds, titles, anything you may need for close-out.
- ***Don't drag out your close-out*** – Submit as soon as you can, memories fade, consultants get re-assigned.
- ***Pre-close-out meeting*** – We are available to review all of the required elements for close-out prior to submission.
- ***Submit one packet*** – Do not submit various close-out documents piecemeal. Submit all close-out documents in one packet with a detailed cover letter and clearly labeled elements.
- ***All elements should be consistent*** – The as-built should be accurate and match the project scope. The CFO certification should match the total project expenditures.



Monmouth County Municipal Park Improvement Grant Program

LESSONS LEARNED – GRANT CLOSE OUT

- ***Allow time for close-out*** – Gathering and preparing close-out documents can take some time. Do not wait until the project deadline to begin the process.
- ***Allow US time for close-out*** – It takes significant time and effort to review close-out packets. Do not expect payment right away. We may be contacting you for additional information. After staff review and a site visit, the close-out packet goes to the program attorney for final review and payment.





Monmouth County Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program

The Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners has authorized a shared services program to assist with municipal open space acquisitions. The **Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program** assists municipalities by providing additional funding needed to preserve lands for municipal parks and open space. These are cooperative projects with the Board of Recreation Commissioners and the County Commissioners. The Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program is funded directly from the Open Space Trust Fund Land Account.





Monmouth County Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program

Purpose - The purpose of the Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program is to expand parks, historic preservation, and open space opportunities for Monmouth County residents by providing funding to assist municipalities with parks and open space acquisition.

Program Goals - The goal of the program is to acquire lands for parks, recreation, and open space preservation. Open space acquisition should target lands identified in the County Open Space Plan, local open space preservation and recreation plans, lands that are significant local historic sites, or lands that function as important wildlife habitat.



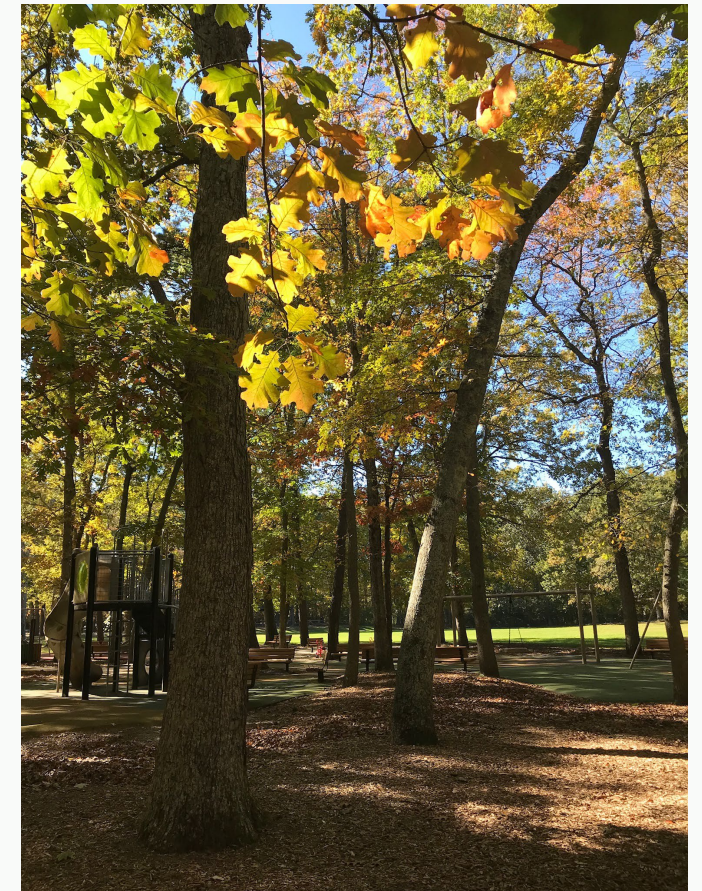


Monmouth County Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program

The program is a cooperative open space acquisition program between the County and any Monmouth County municipality. Municipalities are encouraged, however, to seek NJDEP Green Acres open space acquisition funding and to form partnerships with other public or non-profit organizations to enhance project funding.

The applicant municipality must acquire a controlling interest in real property including but not limited to the following:

- Fee simple acquisition with public access
- Purchase of Conservation Easement with public access
- Extinguishment of Development Rights





Monmouth County Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program

Funding - Funding amounts are based on availability in the Monmouth County Open Space Trust Fund. There is no annual allocation for the program and funding for County Parks Acquisition and County Farmland Preservation projects will impact the availability of funds.

When funding is available, it can range from 50% to 75% of the purchase price remaining after Green Acres or other funding source participation.

Funding can be made available as reimbursement or “at closing.” Projects requiring funding “at closing” will require additional coordination and reliance on BORC and BOCC meeting schedules.





Monmouth County Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program

Requirements/Conditions -

- All projects will require County Board of Recreation Commissioners and County Commissioner approval by resolution.
- At least one appraisal less than three years old and prepared by a New Jersey Green Acres Program approved appraiser must be included for the initial SSA.
- Preliminary Assessment and Site Inspection (PASI) of the property and all actions to address environmental Areas of Concern will be required prior to closing.
- A deed of conservation easement shall be required stating that the property must be held in perpetuity for park, recreation and open space purposes. The County will expect the municipality to add the property to their Recreation & Open Space Inventory (ROSI).
- The County may require a Right of First Refusal (ROFRO) on conservation easements purchased through the program.
- The facility/property must be open to the general public.





Monmouth County Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program

Shared Services Agreements for acquisition projects will be required to include all details on project responsibilities and cost sharing, including which party will be responsible for the following deliverables and costs:

- Landowner contact
- Appraisals
- Legal services and fees
- Title Searches and Title Insurance
- Recording costs
- Engineering and surveying
- PASIs and actions addressing Areas of Concern
- Building demolition, renovation and/or stabilization
- Owner/Tenant relocation
- Condemnation costs
- Contingencies





Monmouth County Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program

MLPIP Completed Projects		
Town	Project	Acres
Marlboro	American Dream	15.8
Colts Neck	Maida Farm	28.8
Millstone	Lee Farm	125.3
Fair Haven	Spagnuolo	0.75
Holmdel	Crawfords Hill Horn Antenna	34.63
Monmouth Beach	11 Robins Street	0.34
Middletown	Mater Dei	28.54
Oceanport	40 Acres Project	40.63
Middletown	Lincroft Presbyterian Church	15.33
Wall	Buser Farm	8.4
	TOTAL	298.52





Contacts for Grant Programs

Municipal Land Preservation Incentive Program

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Municipal Park Improvement Program

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