

GREEN ACRES PROGRAM
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

**PLANNING INCENTIVE
LAND ACQUISITION APPLICATION**

LOCAL & NONPROFIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Deadline: February 5, 2025



Green Acres Mission Statement

*To achieve, in partnership with others, a system of interconnected open spaces
the protection of which will preserve and enhance New Jersey's natural environment
and its historic, scenic, and recreational resources
for public use and enjoyment.*

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APPLICATION INFORMATION

Planning Incentive Acquisition Application

Since 1961, the Green Acres Program has funded the acquisition of open space for recreation and conservation purposes, and the development of outdoor recreational facilities. Green Acres remains committed to preserving New Jersey's natural, historic, and recreational resources statewide and is pleased to continue the tradition of partnering with local and county governments and nonprofit organizations to serve New Jersey residents.

To support local governments with progressive open space policies, Green Acres established the Planning Incentive (PI) category, which provides matching grants to qualifying local governments for the acquisition of land for conservation and recreation purposes. To qualify for this funding, local governments must have a Green Acres-approved Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), and either an open space tax *or* an alternate funding source that is stable, equivalent to an annual tax levy, and approved by Green Acres. Currently, over 230 municipalities and all 21 counties in the state have passed referenda authorizing the establishment of an open space tax.

A local government can benefit in two ways from submitting a Planning Incentive acquisition application. First, Planning Incentive applicants are eligible for 50 percent matching grant funding, as compared to 25 percent grant funding under the Green Acres Standard Acquisition category. Second, a local government may submit one Planning Incentive application to acquire any eligible property identified in its OSRP. Under the Standard Acquisition category, a local government would have to make application for each project site targeted for acquisition.

Once a project has been approved under the PI category, Green Acres will establish an account from which the local government can obtain funding for the acquisition of lands identified in its plan. Applicants will be asked to prioritize sites and will be required to follow the normal Green Acres land acquisition guidelines and procedures, including obtaining appraisals, surveys, preliminary site assessments, and title insurance, for each parcel. Local governments may request additional funding for an existing Planning Incentive project by submitting a Supplemental Funding Request Form when Green Acres announces a funding round, such as the recently announced February 5, 2025, deadline. The form requests information regarding anticipated acquisitions and funding needs for the upcoming year. Requests for supplemental funding will be considered if the local government has made regular and significant progress in spending previously approved funding.

Green Acres has recently updated the [Open Space and Recreation Plan Guidelines](#) for participation in the Planning Incentive Program. Applicants should review the guidelines, particularly the public engagement and public hearing requirements, and [contact us](#) with any questions.

Green Acres will be hosting two virtual Question and Answer sessions on November 25th and December 18th. Links are on the Green Acres website.

2025 Funding Round Programs

The Green Acres Program will offer four funding programs for 2025, as identified below. Information about each program is provided in all Green Acres application packages to ensure that applicants are aware of all funding options and the limits on the number of funding requests that can be submitted per applicant.

Figure 1: 2025 Funding Round Programs

Applicants may submit one request per funding program

Program	Description	Eligibility Notes
Traditional Green Acres	Land Acquisition (including Planning Incentive, Site-Specific Incentive, Standard, Urban Aid, or Nonprofit) OR	All local governments and nonprofits
	Park Development OR	All local governments; Nonprofit projects located in an Urban Aid, Densely Populated, or Highly Populated Municipality or a Densely Populated County or that draw over 75% of their users from those areas
	Urban Parks Rollover	Projects located within Overburdened Communities Subject to Adverse Cumulative Stressors within Urban Aid Municipalities that were unfunded or underfunded through the Urban Parks Program
Stewardship	Restoration and Protection of Natural Resources and Historic Landscapes	All local governments and nonprofits
Jake's Law Playground Funding	Completely Inclusive Playgrounds – <i>Final year of enhanced funding pilot program</i>	County and municipal governments
Urban Parks	Land Acquisition, Park Development & Historic Preservation	Local government projects located within Overburdened Communities Subject to Adverse Cumulative Stressors within Urban Aid Municipalities

This application is for Planning Incentive acquisition projects. Please see the [Green Acres' Forms and Regulations website](#) to obtain applications for other programs. Please note that February 5, 2025, is the deadline for all funding programs, for new applications as well as supplemental funding requests from local governments and nonprofits that have active projects that are progressing in a timely fashion.

For local governments and nonprofits seeking supplemental funding for previously approved Traditional Green Acres or Stewardship projects, please complete and submit the 2025 Supplemental Funding Request Form, available on the [Green Acres website](#) by the February 5, 2025 deadline. Applicants for supplemental funding should reach out to the appropriate Green Acres contact for assistance in filling out the form.

Funding Request Limits

Applicants may submit one request for each funding program for which they are eligible, and the one request for each program may be a new application OR a supplemental funding request. For example, an applicant can request supplemental funding for a Planning Incentive project OR funding for a Green Acres park development application, but not both. The [*Funding Request Limits by Applicant Type*](#) chart in the Tools / References, which lists the maximum number of funding requests that can be submitted by each applicant type, may be helpful.

Eligibility

The Green Acres Program *strongly* suggests applicants contact the program prior to preparing an application to discuss the proposed project and confirm eligibility. New applications will undergo an eligibility and completeness review upon receipt; only those complete applications deemed eligible will proceed.

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for funding under the Planning Incentive category, a local government (county or municipal) must have:

1. Enacted, and be **collecting** and **expending**, an open space tax pursuant to either N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.7d., of at least **one-half cent** per \$100 of assessed value, *or*
Adopted an alternate funding means **approved by the Green Acres Program** for land preservation that is stable and reasonably equivalent to an annual open space and recreation tax levy of at least 1 cent per \$100 of assessed value for a ten-year period; and
2. Prepared an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) that has been approved by the Green Acres Program within the last 10 years. First-time PI applicants should contact Green Acres to discuss their OSRP.

Please note: Municipalities and nonprofits that have three or more open projects, and counties that have five or more open projects, as well as applicants that are not making sufficient progress resolving open compliance issues, were notified in October 2024 that they are not eligible to submit new applications. The following exceptions apply for applicants that have too many open projects: (1) They are eligible to submit a new Jake's Law application; and (2) They may submit supplemental funding requests for open projects if those projects are making significant progress. No exceptions apply for applicants with stalled compliance issues.

Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements

Green Acres has prepared [Open Space and Recreation Plan Guidelines](#) for local governments interested in participating in the PI and preparing an OSRP. The organization of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, planning methods employed, and level of detail are at the discretion of the local government. At the same time, applicants are strongly encouraged to meaningfully engage the public and interested stakeholders in the planning process. The Guidelines describe each of the OSRP required components.

Applicants should coordinate their OSRP with other planning documents and initiatives to avoid land use conflicts with affordable housing, transportation, flood control, or similar projects. Green Acres encourages applicants to use existing information, such as natural resource inventories, master plan elements, and other related information to prepare the OSRP.

Eligible Projects

Eligible land acquisition projects are those that result in the acquisition of land for outdoor recreation and/or conservation purposes, including, but not limited to, the purchase of forests, natural areas, linear parkland for trails, historic sites, conservation areas, water bodies, and open space for active or passive recreation purposes. Any existing structures on an acquisition site must either be used in direct support of outdoor recreation, or demolished to create open space, provided that the DEP's Historic Preservation Office determines they do not have historic significance. For more information, please see our [Structures policy](#).

Applicants may purchase land in fee simple or may acquire a perpetual conservation easement or historic preservation easement on the property, as long as meaningful public access is provided to the project site. For more information, please see our [Easement policy](#). Meaningful public access, as determined by Green Acres based on specific parcel circumstances, must be provided from the time of closing to every project funded under this program.

Eligible Project Sites

Applicants may apply to acquire any property with clear title, except property that:

- is identified by a municipality or otherwise designated for future use in meeting municipal fair share low- and moderate-income housing obligations under the Fair Housing Act of 1985 (N.J.S.A. 52:27D-301)
- is designated as a road right-of-way
- is listed on a Recreation and Open Space Inventory
- is permanently preserved, as determined by the Department
- is claimed as state-owned tidelands
- contains a non-historic structure that the applicant does not anticipate using in support of outdoor recreation

Green Acres encourages municipalities and counties to reclaim and restore former brownfields sites and transform them into public spaces, such as recreation and natural areas. The Department's [Office of Brownfield and Community Revitalization](#) has experienced DEP case managers who can assist with remediation and revitalization efforts. Applicants can apply to acquire a contaminated site and, if approved, pursue remediation while obtaining and submitting the other necessary deliverables for the acquisition project.

Local governments proposing to acquire property for future park development should carefully analyze site suitability early in the planning process and prior to applying. Site attributes, such as wetlands, dunes, endangered species, mature forested areas, or other significant natural resources, may define, limit or, in some instances, preclude current or future development.

Eligible Costs

The following are eligible land acquisition project costs:

- The cost of acquiring the land (subject to the Green Acres' certified market value/average appraised value, which will be established through the appraisal process if the project receives a funding award)
- Technical report expenses, including appraisal(s), environmental assessment (preliminary assessment report and, if necessary, site investigation), title, and survey, provided these reports are prepared in accordance with Green Acres guidelines
- The cost to demolish *non-historic* structures on a site being acquired, up to a cap of 10% of the eligible land cost or \$100,000, whichever is less (cap is waived for projects in Urban Aid Municipalities)
- Tenant relocation costs, if applicable
- Costs of well testing done in compliance with the Private Well Testing Act (P.L. 2001, c. 40; N.J.S.A. 58:12A-26 et seq.), if applicable
- Incidental costs, individually itemized, associated with the implementation of the acquisition project, including legal, engineering, financial, geological, hydrological, inspection, and other professional services, up to a cap of 2% of the eligible land cost or \$20,000, whichever is less
- The value of a condemnation commissioners' award or jury award in excess of the certified market value/average appraised value of a property

To ensure sufficient funding, all anticipated costs should be included in the initial funding request.

The following costs are not eligible for Green Acres funding:

- Administrative and operating costs and salaries and wages of any employee of the local government or nonprofit applicant
- Costs to remediate soil, groundwater, and surface water contamination
- Property taxes
- The value of a condemnation settlement (consent judgment) in excess of the certified market value/average appraised value of a property

For more information, see the Green Acres Rules excerpts for Allowable Costs in Tools / References.

Funding

It is strongly encouraged for applicants to contact the appropriate Green Acres project manager prior to application preparation to confirm funding categories and likely awards.

Funding Percentages

Planning Incentive Acquisition projects are eligible for a 50% matching grant, with the exception that PI projects located in Urban Aid municipalities are eligible for a 75% matching grant.

Matching Funds

Green Acres funding must be matched. Possible sources of matching funds include:

- Local government open space, capital, or bond funds
- County open space program funding, used directly by the county or granted to municipalities/nonprofits
- Other public funding sources
- Private or corporate monetary donations
- Grants from private foundations
- Green Acres loan funding for local governments, if available. Acquisition loans have a term of 30 years and a 0% interest rate. Please note that grants and loans obtained through the Green Acres Program are not subject to local government CAP laws. Upon loan approval, a local government will be required to pass a capital spending ordinance authorizing two semi-annual repayments to the state.

Ineligible sources of match funding include:

- Other Green Acres funding (i.e., Green Acres State Land Acquisition Program funding or Green Acres Local & Nonprofit Assistance Program funding awarded to a different applicant)
- Other funding awarded through the Garden State Preservation Trust (i.e., funding from the State Farmland Preservation Program or the NJ Historic Trust)
- The value of any donated goods and services that have not been obtained in conformance with the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.
- The value of another entity's contribution to the acquisition if they will receive a proportionate property interest.

Links to specific sources of possible matching funds can be found in the *Helpful Links* section. Applicants must identify the anticipated source of matching funds at the time of application, and the applicant's Chief Financial Officer must sign off on the financial figures in the required resolution, including the available match amount.

Funding Round Caps

While Planning Incentive applications may be eligible for funding up to a certain percentage of the total project cost, the actual amount awarded to individual projects is determined by weighing total demand against available resources. Since the demand for Green Acres funding consistently exceeds the amounts available, successful applications are normally approved subject to an award cap. Award cap amounts for local government projects are calculated using a base award, adjusted based on the type of applicant.

While award levels cannot be predicted prior to knowing the total demand, for perspective, here is a chart of the range of funding round caps in the previous four funding rounds for each type of applicant:

<i>Project Sponsor</i>	<i>Award Formula</i>	<i>Range of Funding Round Caps 2021-2024</i>
<i>Standard Municipality</i>	Base award	\$500,000 - \$700,000
<i>Highly or Densely Populated Municipality</i>	1½ x base award	\$750,000 - \$1,050,000
<i>Urban Aid Municipality</i>	2 x base award	\$1,000,000 - \$1,400,000
<i>Standard County</i>	2 x base award	\$1,000,000 - \$1,400,000
<i>Highly Populated County</i>	2½ x base award	\$1,250,000 - \$1,750,000
<i>Densely Populated County</i>	3 x base award	\$1,500,000 - \$2,100,000
<i>Nonprofit</i>		Awards based on demonstrated need, past performance, and overall demand

Grounds For Application Disqualification

As previously noted, new applications will undergo an eligibility and completeness review upon receipt; only those deemed eligible and complete will be considered for funding. The following circumstances will disqualify an application:

1. Applicant is a municipality that has three or more open projects or is a county that has five or more open projects at the time of application (affected applicants were previously notified)
2. Applicant has failed to adequately address outstanding Green Acres compliance issues (affected applicants were previously notified)
3. Application submission does not include all required items by deadline (see Submissions Checklist)
(Must be submitted on the Green Acres website by 5:00 pm on February 5, 2025)
4. Application has failed to discuss and document meaningful public input during the planning process (see OSRP Guidelines)
5. Public hearing/notice requirements have not been met (see checklist)
6. Application is not signed by the person authorized in the enabling resolution ("NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED..." paragraph)
7. Application is not fully signed, including by Chief Financial Officer (bottom of the last page of the application form)

What happens after application submission?

Approval Process

After applications are reviewed, Green Acres will first identify projects that are ineligible. Next, Green Acres will rank eligible projects and compile a list of approval recommendations, which then will be reviewed by the Department and transmitted to the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT). The GSPT will approve successful applications using funds available from the 2014 voter-approved referendum, which became the Preserve New Jersey Act (P.L. 2016, C 12). Green Acres will send letters notifying applicants if their application was successful or not. Approved projects must then go through legislative appropriation.

The length of the approval process has varied in the past, averaging 3-6 months. Many of the changes to be implemented during this funding round are designed to shorten the review process; this year the anticipated DEP/GSPT review period is 3 to 4 months after the submission deadline. We cannot predict the length of the legislative appropriation process.

Please note: To maintain funding eligibility, applicants must not move forward before funding awards are announced. Should an emergent circumstance arise, please contact the appropriate Green Acres project manager to discuss the At-Risk Authorization process.

Highlighted Project Administration Requirements

While Green Acres projects involve several requirements, the most notable are highlighted below.

Preliminary Assessment Report (PAR)

Green Acres requires careful review of all proposed project sites for evidence of past use as landfills; hazardous waste production, storage, or disposal sites; or the adverse effects resulting from such sites in close proximity to the proposed public park, as well as the presence of historic fill and certain residual agricultural chemicals. This review is intended to minimize public liability for site cleanup costs and allows the state, Green Acres' applicants, and the public to be reasonably assured that lands acquired or developed with public funds can be used for recreation or conservation purposes without risk to public health.

For this reason, approved applicants will be required to obtain a preliminary assessment of the project site. Green Acres will provide guidance documents that require adherence to the criteria established by the DEP's Technical Requirements for Site Remediation (N.J.A.C. 7:26E-3). A percentage of the costs normally associated with this professional service is reimbursable as part of an approved and completed Green Acres project, as long as the preliminary assessment is done in accordance with Green Acres guidelines.

If the Preliminary Assessment Report recommends additional investigation of any Area of Concern at the project site, the applicant will be required to submit a Site Investigation Report (SIR). If the SIR notes contamination above acceptable levels, the applicant may pursue remediation while obtaining and submitting the other necessary project deliverables. Once all Areas of Concern are resolved to the Department's satisfaction, Green Acres participation in the project may proceed.

Conservation/Historic Preservation Restriction

Nonprofits that acquire land with Green Acres funding must execute and donate to the State, at no charge, a conservation restriction or historic preservation restriction, as the case may be, pursuant to P.L. 1979, c. 378 (C.13:8B-1 et seq.) on the lands to be acquired utilizing the grant. The conservation restriction and historic preservation restriction referred to in the law will be provided by Green Acres. Green Acres may waive this requirement for land that is currently or shortly will be listed on a local government's Recreation and Open Space Inventory (see [Post-Project Requirements & Responsibilities](#) section below).

Project Period

Once approved, Green Acres establishes a two-year project period, during which time the local government or nonprofit must meet all procedural requirements, complete the acquisition project, and request payment. In addition, significant progress must be made throughout the project period to remain eligible. A proposed project schedule is required as part of each application to assist with project planning and to allow Green Acres to evaluate the proposal. Please talk to the appropriate Green Acres project manager regarding any schedule changes that will affect the ability to meet project deadlines. Barring extenuating circumstances, approved projects that are not making significant progress or cannot be completed by the end of the project period will be cancelled.

Post-Project Requirements & Responsibilities

Prospective applicants are urged to familiarize themselves with the Department's Green Acres Program rules (N.J.A.C. 7:36, found at the [Green Acres' Forms and Regulations website](#)). Acceptance of Green Acres funds obligates the local government or nonprofit to adhere to the Department's requirements, both during the funding process and after a project is complete.

Protected Parkland – Recreation and Open Space Inventory

The Department is dedicated to creating a net increase in parkland. For that reason, a local government that receives Green Acres funding is not allowed to convey, dispose of, or divert to a use for other than recreation and conservation purposes (1) any lands (including facilities) funded by Green Acres and/or (2) any lands held by the local government for recreation and conservation purposes at the time of receipt of Green Acres funding. The local government is required to list such lands on the Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI), which is part of an application for Green Acres funding. If the application is approved, the ROSI will become part of the project agreement between the local government and the State.

Parkland Maintenance and Operation

Prior to accepting our funding, local governments and nonprofits should be aware of the specific requirements of N.J.A.C. 7:36-25 regarding maintenance and operation of Green Acres encumbered parkland. The requirements related to maintenance and operation of Green Acres encumbered parkland are administered and enforced by the Department's [Office of Transactions and Public Land Administration, Public Land Compliance Section](#) ("OTPLA"). These requirements include, but are not limited to,

1. Upon closing, Green Acres encumbered parkland must be open to the public without discrimination or exclusion based on residency. N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.10 (for funded parkland) and N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.11 (for unfunded parkland)
2. Scheduling the use of facilities either funded by Green Acres or located on parkland acquired with Green Acres assistance (funded parkland) is allowable, provided that such programmed uses are not exclusive or discriminatory and that adequate provisions are made for non-scheduled use. N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.9. The Department does not regulate the scheduling of facilities on unfunded parkland. N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.11.
3. Fees for use of directly funded sites are allowable. Differential fees for use by non-residents or different categories of users may also be charged but must be discussed with OTPLA to ensure they are equitable. All revenues derived from use or operation of a directly funded site must be used by the local government for the operation, maintenance, or capital expenses of either that park facility or their funded parkland or recreation system as a whole. A nonprofit must use any revenues derived from the use or operation of a funded site for either that park facility or other permanently preserved recreation and conservation land owned by the nonprofit. N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.9. The Department does not regulate the fees for use of unfunded parkland. N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.11.

4. Structures being acquired or developed with Green Acres funding, or new construction on funded parkland after a property is acquired by a local government or nonprofit, must be used exclusively in support of public outdoor recreation and conservation purposes and must be approved in advance by OTPLA. This condition will be included in the project agreement if the project is approved. Many compliance problems result from the use of such structures for ineligible purposes. To avoid such problems, local governments and nonprofits must discuss proposed future uses of structures with Green Acres and OTPLA, both during and after the funding process, to ensure that such uses are allowable. N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.7. The requirements for new construction or use of structures on unfunded parkland are similar to those that apply to funded parkland, but structures on unfunded parkland may be used for public indoor recreation as well as support of outdoor recreation. N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.8.
5. Leasing of Green Acres encumbered parkland for agricultural purposes is allowable as an interim parkland management tool but is not allowed as a permanent use of parkland. Farm leases on funded parkland must be approved by OTPLA and are subject to specific requirements in N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.13. Clearing of trees for agricultural use is not allowed on Green Acres encumbered parkland. Public access is required after closing, even if the property is leased.
6. Compliance inspections of funded parkland are conducted by OTPLA every three years. If noncompliance is identified and not corrected in a timely fashion, Green Acres, in consultation with OTPLA, may suspend payments on active projects and the local government or nonprofit will not be eligible for future Green Acres funding. Additional information about post-funding responsibilities can be found at [what-to-expect-when-we-re-inspecting-otpla.pdf \(nj.gov\)](#).
7. Parkland must not be sold, leased, exchanged, or donated except to the State, or local government unit, a qualifying tax-exempt nonprofit organization, or the Federal government for recreation and conservation purposes (and then only with the prior written approval of the Commissioner).

FORMS & SAMPLES

For G.A. Use Only

Date Rec'd: _____

Application No. _____

LOCAL & NONPROFIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

PLANNING INCENTIVE APPLICATION FORM

Complete and submit application with all required attachments by February 5, 2025, through the Green Acres website. Instructions for submitting your application can be found at www.NJGreenAcres.org.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: _____

Project Sponsor: _____

Applicant Type (*please check appropriate box*):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Standard Municipality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Standard County
<input type="checkbox"/>	Highly or Densely Populated Municipality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Highly Populated County
<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Aid Municipality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Densely Populated County

FUNDING REQUEST

Provide estimated cost and funding request information for only the priority acquisition(s) that the applicant anticipates acquiring within the next two years:

Total Estimated Cost of Project (*see attached [Allowable Costs](#) excerpt from Green Acres rules*):

Land Cost	\$
Appraisals	\$
Preliminary Assessment Report (& Site Investigation Report, if necessary)	\$
Title Commitment & Policy	\$
Survey	\$
Demolition*	\$
Incidental Costs*	\$
Total Project Cost – Rounded to next \$1,000	\$

* Demolition and incidental costs limited to established caps (*see [Eligible Costs](#) section*)

Green Acres Funding Request:

Total Project Cost (<i>from above</i>)	\$
x Eligible Grant %*	x 0. =
Eligible Green Acres Grant	\$
Grant Request	\$
Loan Request	\$

* See [Funding Categories & Percentages](#) section; confirm with Green Acres contact

Has the applicant or partners received any funding awards from other sources for this property, or are any applications pending? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please list source, amount, and deadline to use funds: _____

SPONSOR INFORMATION

Project Sponsor:

Name of Local Government or Nonprofit	
Street Address	
City, State, Zip	
Webpage Address	
Tax ID Number	

Chief Executive Officer:

Name		Telephone	
Title		Email	

Current Community Profile:

(County applications should provide information based on the anticipated service area of the project.)

Population		Year	
Area (square miles)		Population/Square Mile	

Contact for Application Questions:

Name	
Title	
Street Address	
City, State, Zip	
Telephone	
Cell Phone	
Email Address	

Contact for Project Management if Project is Funded *(if different than Application Contact):*

Name	
Title	
Street Address	
City, State, Zip	
Telephone	
Cell Phone	
Email Address	

SIGNATURES (2)

I, _____ (name of official authorized by the governing body resolution), **hereby certify that the information provided within this Green Acres Program Application Form is complete and true.**

Date

Signature of official authorized to submit application*

*** Must be individual authorized by attached [Enabling Resolution](#) or application will be ineligible**

I, _____ (name of Chief Financial Officer), **have reviewed the likely funding award for this project (see [Figure 3: Funding Round Caps](#)) and hereby certify that the financial information in the attached Governing Body Enabling Resolution is accurate.**

Date

Signature of Chief Financial Officer

Application Checklist – Planning Incentive Projects

Application materials must be submitted electronically in pdf form through the Green Acres website by **midnight on February 5, 2025**. Instructions for submitting your application can be found at www.NJGreenAcres.org.

NOTE: This checklist should be returned with the completed application. If the starred item (*) is not applicable, please indicate 'N/A' next to that item. All other required items must be submitted. Specific instructions for each submission follow the checklist.

REQUIRED ITEMS		
	1.	Application Form
	2.	Governing Body Resolution
	3.	Anticipated Acquisition Schedule for First Priority Property
	4.	Open Space and Recreation Plan
	5.	Planning Incentive Grant Eligibility Certification
	6.	Planning Board Letter
	7.	Letters of Support

Application Checklist Items – Notes

1. Application Form

Please make sure that/please note:

- All questions are answered
- Project sponsor is the local government or nonprofit that is requesting funding
- Applicant type – see Definitions section or municipality/county lists in Tools / References
- Funding figures
 - Please review Allowable Costs excerpt from the Green Acres rules
 - Please contact Green Acres to review project cost and request figures
- Project contact is someone the Green Acres Program can contact with questions about the **application**.
 - If the applicant would like Green Acres to send **project-related** correspondence to a different contact person if funding is awarded, please list information for that individual as well
 - If a consultant is listed as the contact, please specify if there is a municipal or county contact who should be copied on correspondence
- Form is signed by individual identified in the “NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED...” paragraph of the applicant’s Enabling Resolution
- Form is signed by the Chief Financial Officer

2. Governing Body Resolution

Please make sure that/please note:

- The enclosed form must be used, without changes
- Resolution amounts equal request amounts – In the event there is a discrepancy, the amounts listed in the resolution will be used
- If not requesting loan, loan amount should be listed as \$0
- Individual identified in “NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED...” paragraph is the person who signs the application form (only one person should be listed)
- The applicant’s match amount must be listed

It is extremely important that the resolution is accurate, so please reach out to your Green Acres contact with any questions!

3. Project Schedule

Please make sure that/please note:

- Dates are provided for anticipated completion of each project step, with the understanding that dates may change based on the ultimate project approval date.
- This schedule demonstrates a plan for each step of the proposed acquisition, so that if approved, it can be completed within two years - i.e., the date for submitting for payment is not past the two-year period (given a hypothetical start date of July 1, 2025, ending no later than July 1, 2027).

4. Open Space and Recreation Plan

Please make sure that/please note:

- Consult the OSRP Guidelines and reach out to Green Acres’ Planner for guidance before initiating the Open Space and Recreation Plan preparation process
- When submitting the OSRP, include documentation of public engagement activities and of the public hearing (see OSRP Guidelines and Public Hearing Checklist)

5. Planning Incentive Grant Eligibility Certification

Please complete the [Planning Incentive Grant Eligibility Certification](#) form

6. Planning Board Letter

Submit a letter from the local government's Planning Board stating that the OSRP has been, or will be (give date) adopted as part of the Master Plan

7. Letters of Support

Please make sure that/please note:

- Letters note why the particular writer/organization supports the project
- Letters are dated within the last twelve months
- Looking for letters from current/future park user groups, environmental commission, shade tree commission, recreation advisory board, park commission, community groups that will benefit from the project, etc.

GREEN ACRES APPLICATION
Enabling Resolution Template

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program ("State"), provides grants and/or loans to municipal and county governments and grants to nonprofit organizations for assistance in the acquisition, development, and stewardship of lands for outdoor recreation and conservation purposes; and

WHEREAS, the _____ (*name of applicant*) desires to further the public interest by obtaining total funding in the amount of \$ _____, in the form of a \$ _____ matching grant and, if available, a \$ _____ loan, from the State to fund the following project(s): _____ (*project title*) _____ at a cost of \$ _____ (*total project cost*);

WHEREAS, the State shall determine if the application is complete and in conformance with the scope and intent of the Green Acres Program, and notify the applicant of the amount of the funding award; and

WHEREAS, the applicant is willing to use the State's funds in accordance with such rules, regulations, and applicable statutes, and is willing to enter into an agreement with the State for the above-named project;

NOW, THEREFORE, the governing body/board resolves that:

1. _____ (*name of authorized official*) or the successor to the office of _____ (*title of authorized official*) is hereby authorized to:
 - a. make application for such a loan and/or such a grant,
 - b. provide additional application information and furnish such documents as may be required, and
 - c. act as the authorized correspondent of the above-named applicant;
2. The applicant agrees to provide its matching share to the Green Acres funding request, if a match is required, in the amount of \$ _____;
3. In the event the State's funds are less than the total project cost specified above, the applicant has the balance of funding necessary to complete the project;
4. The applicant agrees to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations in its performance of the project; and
5. This resolution shall take effect immediately.

CERTIFICATION

I, _____ (*name and title of Secretary or equivalent*) do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution adopted by _____ (*name of legal body or board*) at a meeting held on the _____ day of _____, 20____.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunder set my hand and the official seal of this body this _____ day of _____, 20____.

(*name and title of Secretary or equivalent*)

Anticipated Acquisition Schedule for First Priority Property

The project period will be **two years** from the date of the executed project agreement. In estimating a project schedule, please assume a hypothetical July 1, 2025, agreement date. If approved, this project schedule will be adjusted to the actual agreement date. Regular reporting will be required to ensure continuous progress.

Approximate Date

1. Obtain and submit Preliminary Assessment Report
(Resolution of any Areas of Concern should occur concurrent with subsequent acquisition steps.) _____
2. Obtain appraisal instructions from Green Acres _____
3. Hire appraisers
(This may include an on-site meeting, unless waived by Green Acres.) _____
4. Submit appraisals to Green Acres for review
(Allow 60 days for certification of market value.) _____
5. Sign purchase contract with owner _____
6. Obtain and submit survey _____
7. Obtain and submit title insurance commitment _____
8. Close on property _____
9. Submit for payment _____

Comments: _____

Public Hearing Checklist

PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

1. ____ Public hearing notice published in a prominent location on applicant's website and through social media account(s) that link to the application information page on the applicant's website at least 15 calendar days prior to hearing (e.g., if the hearing is on January 20th, the notice must be posted on the website on or before January 5th). (*see template*)
Date of posting _____ Date of hearing _____
2. ____ Public hearing notice published in the official newspaper of the municipality in which the proposed project is located, preferably at least 15 days prior, but at a minimum 48 hours before the hearing.
Date of publication _____ Date of hearing _____
3. ____ For county projects, public hearing notice also published in a newspaper of general interest and circulation, preferably at least 15 days prior, but at a minimum 48 hours before the hearing.
Date of publication _____ Date of hearing _____
5. ____ For county projects, public hearing notice forwarded to the clerk of the municipality(ies) within which the project is located, preferably at least 15 days prior, but at a minimum 48 hours before the hearing.
6. ____ Hearing notice published in the newspaper(s) as a display ad (encouraged) or a public notice.
7. ____ Hearing notice specifically mentioned the Green Acres application.
8. ____ Website/social media hearing notice included a link to information about the application.
9. ____ Newspaper hearing notice included the link address for accessing the application information and instructions for how to access a hard copy of the application package.
10. ____ If public meeting was held remotely, meeting access information included in the public notice.

PUBLIC HEARING REQUIREMENTS

1. ____ Hearing held in the evening, 6:00pm or later. (Meeting may start earlier as long as the Green Acres hearing is held at or after 6:00pm and the different times are noted in the public notice.)
2. ____ Hearing attended by a quorum of the elected governing body of the local government.
4. ____ Each public comment at the hearing addressed.
5. ____ If the governing body voted on the [Enabling Resolution](#) at the same public meeting, the vote on the resolution took place *after* the public hearing was held.

MEETING MINUTES REQUIREMENTS

1. ____ Public hearing minutes are being submitted with this application. (Draft minutes can be submitted prior to final approval by the governing body. Transcripts are also acceptable.)
2. ____ Minutes are in written form (no video or audio submissions).
3. ____ Complete meeting minutes are being submitted (not just a portion).
4. ____ The minutes include all public comments and the response for each.

Public Hearing Announcement Template
Planning Incentive Acquisition Application

Applicant is seeking funding through the State of NJ Green Acres Program to acquire property on in municipality(ies). The public is encouraged to attend a public hearing to learn more about the proposal and to ask questions or provide comments on the proposed plan on Day, Date, 202__, at Time. The meeting will be held In Person/Via (name virtual platform), as part of the regularly scheduled Council meeting. If virtual, provide website link/call in number/access code for meeting here. Written comments on the proposed application may be directed to applicant contact's name, title, email address, and address.

TOOLS / REFERENCES

Funding Request Limits by Applicant Type

Type of Applicant	Max. # of Requests	Eligible Funding Program	Notes
Nonprofit	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Green Acres Stewardship 	
Municipality – Non-Urban Aid	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Green Acres Stewardship 	
Municipality – Urban Aid	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Green Acres Stewardship Urban Parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Parks application project must be located within/easily accessible from an Adversely Stressed Overburdened Community. Municipality may ask to have the Urban Parks application rolled over into the Green Acres round if it is unsuccessful or underfunded, but must indicate which request is the priority (Urban Parks rollover or Green Acres request), since both cannot be funded.
County	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Green Acres Stewardship Jake’s Law Urban Parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Parks application project must be located within/easily accessible from an Adversely Stressed Overburdened Community in an Urban Aid Municipality. County may ask to have the Urban Parks application rolled over into the Green Acres round if it is unsuccessful or underfunded, but must indicate which request is the priority (Urban Parks rollover or Green Acres request), since both cannot be funded.

Highly and Densely Populated Municipalities & Counties

(Updated based on 2020 Census data)

Atlantic

Egg Harbor Twp.
Galloway Twp.

Bergen

Bogota Borough
Dumont Borough
Edgewater Borough
Elmwood Park Borough
Englewood City
Fair Lawn Borough
Fairview Borough
Fort Lee Borough
Hasbrouck Heights Borough
Leonia Borough

Little Ferry Borough
Maywood Borough
New Milford Borough
North Arlington Borough
Palisades Park Borough
Ridgefield Park Village
River Edge Borough
Rochelle Park Twp.
Rutherford Borough
Saddle Brook Twp.
Teaneck Twp.
Wallington Borough
Wood-Ridge Borough

Burlington

Evesham Twp.
Mount Laurel Twp.
Riverside Twp.

Camden

Audubon Borough
Audubon Park Borough
Cherry Hill Twp.
Collingswood Borough
Haddon Twp.

Merchantville Borough
Mount Ephraim Borough
Oaklyn Borough
Woodlynne Borough

Essex

Caldwell Borough
Glen Ridge Borough
Maplewood Twp.
South Orange Village Twp.
West Orange Twp.

Gloucester

Washington Twp.

Hudson

East Newark Borough
Guttenberg Town

Mercer

Ewing Twp.
Hamilton Twp.

Middlesex

Dunellen Borough
East Brunswick Twp.
Edison Twp.
Highland Park Borough
Jamesburg Borough
Monroe Twp.
North Brunswick
Piscataway Twp.
Sayreville Borough
South Amboy City
South Brunswick Twp.
South River Borough

Monmouth

Belmar Borough
Bradley Beach Borough
Freehold Borough

Freehold Twp.
Highlands Borough
Howell Twp.
Keansburg Borough
Keyport Borough
Lake Como Borough
Manalapan Twp.
Marlboro Twp.

Middletown Twp.
Red Bank Borough
Shrewsbury Twp.

Morris

Dover Town
Morristown Town
Parsippany-Troy Hills Twp.
Victory Gardens Borough

Ocean

Berkeley Twp.
Jackson Twp.
Manchester Twp.
Toms River Twp.

Passaic

Haledon Borough
Hawthorne Borough
Prospect Park Borough
Wayne Twp.

Somerset

Bound Brook Borough
Bridgewater Twp.
Franklin Twp.
Hillsborough Twp.
North Plainfield Borough
Somerville Borough
South Bound Brook Borough

Union

Fanwood Borough
Garwood Borough
Linden City
Roselle Park Borough
Union Twp.
Winfield Twp.

Densely Populated Counties

Essex
Hudson
Union

Highly Populated Counties

Bergen
Camden
Mercer
Middlesex
Monmouth
Morris
Ocean
Passaic
Somerset

Urban Aid Municipalities List

FY 2025

Urban Aid Municipalities are those eligible to receive state aid pursuant to P.L.1978, c.14 (C.52:27D-178 et seq.). To determine if the municipality qualifies, please see list below or visit the [Department of Community Affairs' webpage](#).

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>
Asbury Park City*	Monmouth	Monroe Township*	Gloucester
Atlantic City	Atlantic	Montclair Township*	Essex
Bayonne City	Hudson	Mount Holly Township*	Burlington
Belleville Township	Essex	Neptune City Borough*	Monmouth
Bergenfield Borough	Bergen	Neptune Township*	Monmouth
Bloomfield Township	Essex	New Brunswick City*	Middlesex
Brick Township*	Ocean	Newark City	Essex
Bridgeton City*	Cumberland	North Bergen Township	Hudson
Camden City	Camden	Nutley Township	Essex
Carteret Borough*	Middlesex	Old Bridge Township*	Middlesex
Cliffside Park Borough	Bergen	Orange City	Essex
Clifton City	Passaic	Passaic City	Passaic
East Orange City	Essex	Paterson City	Passaic
Elizabeth City	Union	Pemberton Township*	Burlington
Garfield City	Bergen	Penns Grove Borough*	Salem
Glassboro Borough*	Gloucester	Pennsauken Township*	Camden
Gloucester City*	Camden	Perth Amboy City	Middlesex
Gloucester Township*	Camden	Phillipsburg Town*	Warren
Hackensack City	Bergen	Plainfield City	Union
Harrison Town	Hudson	Pleasantville City*	Atlantic
Hillside Township	Union	Rahway City	Union
Hoboken City*	Hudson	Roselle Borough**	Union
Irvington Township	Essex	Salem City*	Salem
Jersey City	Hudson	Trenton City	Mercer
Kearny Town*	Hudson	Union City	Hudson
Lakewood Township*	Ocean	Vineland City*	Cumberland
Lindenwold Borough*	Camden	Weehawken Township*	Hudson
Lodi Borough	Bergen	West New York Town	Hudson
Long Branch City*	Monmouth	Willingboro Township*	Burlington
Millville City*	Cumberland	Winslow Township*	Camden
		Woodbridge Township*	Middlesex
		Woodbury City*	Gloucester

*Meet criteria by budget language

Allowable Costs (Local Governments) - Green Acres Rules Excerpt

N.J.A.C. 7:36-4.10 Allowable project costs

(a) For an acquisition project, the following costs are allowable, provided the local government unit incurs such costs in conformance with all applicable laws, including the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.:

1. Costs that a local government unit incurs to acquire title or permanent interest in the project site, up to the greater of either:

- i. The eligible land cost; or
- ii. The purchase price, up to the hypothetical land value;

2. Relocation payments made by a local government unit in accordance with the Relocation Assistance Act, N.J.S.A. 20:4-1 et seq. or the Relocation Assistance Law at 1967, N.J.S.A. 52:31B-1 et seq. The local government unit shall provide to Green Acres a Workable Relocation Assistance Plan (WRAP) approved by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs;

3. Costs that the local government unit incurs for any appraisal obtained in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:36-8.3;

4. Land survey costs that the local government unit incurs for the field determination of acreage to be subject to Green Acres restrictions, done in compliance with the Local and Nonprofit Land Survey Overview, incorporated herein by reference as chapter Appendix 2. The Overview is available from Green Acres at PO Box 412, Trenton, New Jersey 08625 or on the Green Acres web page at www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres. Technical assistance regarding the preparation of the land survey is available from Green Acres.

5. Costs of the preliminary assessment, when completed in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:26E, as required under N.J.A.C. 7:36-8.2, and further testing as determined by the Department, based on findings and recommendations of the preliminary assessment;

6. Subject to N.J.A.C. 7:36-4.4, costs of demolition and removal of any structure:

i. For a project located in an Urban Aid municipality, all allowable costs associated with demolition and removal of structures are eligible, subject to available funding;

ii. For a project not located in an Urban Aid municipality, allowable costs associated with demolition and removal of structures are limited to a maximum of 10 percent of the eligible land cost or \$100,000, whichever is less; and

iii. The local government unit's attorney must submit a certification that each contract related to the demolition and removal was let in conformance with the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq. This certification is required for each executed contract for professional services or construction, and must be on a form provided by Green Acres;

7. Costs of well testing done in compliance with the Private Well Testing Act, P.L. 2001, c.40; N.J.S.A. 58:12A-26 et seq., and implementing rules at N.J.A.C. 7:9E; and

8. Incidental costs, individually itemized, associated with the implementation of the acquisition project, including the cost of advertising, archaeological, architectural, conservation, engineering, feasibility studies, financial, geological, historic research, hydrological, inspection, legal, planning, or other professional advice, estimates, reports, services, or studies; and title insurance obtained in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:36-9.4(c)1iv and 2iv. Incidental costs are limited to a maximum of two percent of the eligible land cost or \$20,000, whichever is less.

(b) The following types of costs are not allowable:

1. Administrative and operating costs and salary and/or wages of any employee of the local government unit incurred as part of the acquisition project;

2. Real property taxes;
 3. Costs associated with an application for Green Acres funding that the Garden State Preservation Trust does not approve under N.J.A.C. 7:36-8.1;
 4. Remediation work done to address any areas of concern, as defined under the Technical Requirements for Site Remediation, N.J.A.C. 7:25E, that are identified in the preliminary assessment required under N.J.A.C. 7:36-8.2 or by other means; and
 5. Costs in excess of the sum of the approved Green Acres funding plus the local government unit's matching share, if required, unless Green Acres has approved a request for supplemental funding under N.J.A.C. 7:36-9.3.
- (c) Costs of a condemnation award in excess of the eligible land cost of the project site may be funded by a supplemental Green Acres loan or matching grant under N.J.A.C. 7:36-9.3.

Helpful Links

Click on name of link to access. If unsuccessful, hold down the Ctrl button while clicking.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- County open space funds
 - [Atlantic County](#)
 - [Bergen County](#)
 - [Burlington County](#)
 - [Camden County](#)
 - [Cape May County](#)
 - [Cumberland County](#)
 - [Essex County](#)
 - [Gloucester County](#)
 - [Hudson County](#)
 - [Hunterdon County](#)
 - [Mercer County](#)
 - [Middlesex County](#)
 - [Monmouth County](#)
 - [Morris County](#)
 - [Ocean County](#)
 - [Passaic County](#)
 - [Salem County](#)
 - [Somerset County](#)
 - [Sussex County](#)
 - [Union County](#)
 - [Warren County](#)
- General Open Space/Recreation/Community Development Grant Programs
 - [ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grants](#)
 - [DCA Local Recreation Improvement Grant Program](#)
 - [American Water's Building Better Communities Grant Program](#) (administered by National Recreation and Park Association)
 - [DCA Community Development Block Grants](#)
 - [USDA Community Facilities Grant](#)
 - [DCA Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit \(nonprofits working in certain municipalities\)](#)
 - [William Penn Foundation](#) (Greater Philadelphia region)
 - [Open Space Institute](#)
 - [DEP Office of Natural Resource Restoration](#)
 - [City Parks Alliance Equitable Parks Funding Hub](#)
 - [USNPS Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grants Program](#)
- Grant Programs for Specific Types of Improvements
 - [New Jersey Urban and Community Forestry Grants](#)
 - [319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Grants](#)
 - [NJ Historic Trust Funding Programs](#) (cannot be used to match GA funding)
 - [US Tennis Association Grants](#)
 - [Boat U.S. Grants](#)
 - [Boating Infrastructure Grant Program](#) (US Fish & Wildlife Service)
 - [NBIG – National Boat Infrastructure Grant](#) (US Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Accessibility Grants
 - [Recreation Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities Grants \(DCA\)](#)
 - [Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant Program \(IHC\)](#)

OTHER RESOURCES

- Green Acres & OTPLA Links
 - [Green Acres](#)
 - [Green Acres Regulations](#)
 - [Application Forms](#)
 - [Contacts List](#)
 - [Office of Transactions and Public Land Administration, Public Land Compliance Section](#)
 - [Recreation and Open Space Inventory \(ROSI\) Form](#)

- Public Engagement in Park Planning Resources
 - [Community Engagement Resource Guide \(NRPA\)](#)
 - [Designing Parks Using Community-Based Planning](#) (California State Parks)
 - [Planning for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space in Your Community](#) (Washington State)
 - Examples of Park Planning Community Engagement Efforts:
 - [Carver County, MN](#)
 - [Portland, OR](#)
- Open Space and Recreation Facilities Mapping and Planning Resources
 - [SCORP \(Outside, Together!\)](#)
 - [NJMAP / Conservation Blueprint](#)
 - [NJ-GeoWeb](#)
 - [NJ Community Asset Map](#)
 - [DEP-approved Public Access Plans](#)
 - [Healthy Communities NJ](#)
- Climate Mitigation and Resilience Resources
 - [DEP Climate Change Information](#)
 - [NJ Global Warming Response Act 80x50 Report](#)
 - [New Jersey's Flood Indicator Tool](#)
 - [Climate Friendly Parks](#)
 - [US Green Building Council](#)
- Environmental Justice Resources
 - [Office of Environmental Justice](#)
 - [Furthering the Promise](#)
 - [EJMAP](#)
- Historic Preservation Resources
 - [NJ State Historic Preservation Office](#)
 - [New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan](#)
 - [LUCY Online Map Viewer](#)
 - [LUCY User Guide](#)
 - [New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places](#)
 - [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#)
 - [Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes](#)
- Accessibility Resources
 - [Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
 - [NJ Division of Disability Services](#)
 - [New Jersey Barrier Free Subcode](#) (Recreation: Sections 5:23-7.16 to 5:23-7.32)
 - [DCA Rules for Completely Inclusive Playgrounds](#)
 - [Disability Snapshots](#)
 - [Rutgers State Policy Lab – Increased Access to Nature and Outdoor Recreation for People with Disabilities](#)

- Tree Resources
 - [New Jersey Urban & Community Forestry Program](#)
 - [NJ State Approved Foresters](#)
 - [NJ Shade Tree Federation Information](#)
 - [Sample list of NJ Native Trees](#)
- Trail Resources
 - [NJ Trails Program](#)
 - [Routine Trail Maintenance Costs per Mile](#)
- DEP Division of Science & Research Findings on Synthetic Turf:
 - [Environmental Health and Assessment](#)
- Resources for Contaminated Sites
 - [DEP Office of Brownfields Reuse](#)
 - [Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund](#) (grants for site investigation and remediation)
- Public Contracts Information
 - [NJ Local Agency Procurement Laws](#)
 - [Local Public Contracts Law Contracting Thresholds](#)
 - [Prevailing Wage Rates on Construction-Related Public Works Projects](#)
- Nonprofit Compliance Links
 - [IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search](#)
 - [NJ DCA Charities Search](#)