

# COUNTY OF MERCER

McDADE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
640 SOUTH BROAD STREET  
P.O. BOX 8068  
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08650-8068

BRIAN M. HUGHES  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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CONTACT: Peter Saharko  
(609) 278-7137

## **COUNTY EXECUTIVE, HAMILTON MAYOR ANNOUNCE PRESERVATION OF BRAGHELLI FARM**

HAMILTON— Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes and Hamilton Mayor Glen D. Gilmore announced Tuesday that an agreement has been reached to preserve the Braghelli Farm.

“Today’s announcement is the continuation of our long and challenging journey to curb sprawl in Mercer County,” Hughes said. “This preservation effort represents our County and local partners working together to preserve open space and underscores how critically important it is for our County Open Space fund to have the resources it needs. Protecting open space is an investment we make today but a legacy we leave for future generations.”

“Last November, Brian Hughes and I stood on this ground and promised to save the Braghelli tract for future generations,” said Mayor Gilmore. “In 1999, the Mercer County Open Space Preservation Board announced that they would acquire this key piece of property for preservation of open space. That pledge was never seriously pursued until Brian Hughes was elected as County Executive in 2003.”

The 84 acre Braghelli property, located along Kuser Road near Veterans Park, is a part of the Hamilton’s open space plan but has recently been targeted by developers for the construction of 118 homes.

The county and township have reached an agreement with the property’s proposed developers- Beazer Homes- to purchase the property for preservation at a price of \$11,956,000. The County will be using \$4,806,000 in open space preservation funds and the township will be using \$1.8 million in local Green Acres funds, \$1.8 million in township funds, a \$3.4 million loan from the Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program. Delaware and Raritan Greenway will make a \$150,000 contribution to the purchase.

Current zoning would have allowed for 118 single-family homes to be built on the property.

Through the use of bonds and grants, the county has already leveraged the \$30 million collected over 13 years to purchase land worth \$190 million. The County’s tax has directly saved 12,995 acres from development. Today, Mercer County boasts 26,274 acres of preserved open space and farmland.

In August, County Executive Hughes called for a ballot question asking Mercer County voters whether they want to add another penny to the County’s open space tax to protect additional land from development. The proposal would increase the County’s open space levy by 1 cent.

“In the past year – indeed, in the past six months -- escalating land costs in Mercer County have made it more difficult to us to meet our preservation goals,” Hughes said. “An additional penny at this time will strike the right balance between preserving land and controlling property taxes, both now and in the future.”

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