

# GREENWAYS

Newsletter of  
D&R Greenway Land Trust, Inc.  
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## Community Unites to Save St. Michael's

Surrounding the Borough of Hopewell to the south and east are 337 acres of farm fields and woodlands. Largely undisturbed since the Valley was settled over 300 years ago, this land provides a direct link to Hopewell's agricultural history—and a beautiful viewscape that adds to the unique charm and character of Hopewell today.

This land, known locally as the St. Michael's property, has been owned by the Diocese of Trenton since the 1890s. The St. Michael's Orphanage and Industrial School was built on the property in 1896. The facility closed in 1973, but the land remained open and undeveloped. Since then, the community had made several attempts to preserve the property, all without success. In 2004, the Diocese of Trenton approached D&R Greenway Land Trust with the project—and the \$11 million sale price—to see if a financially viable preservation solution could be created as an alternative to development.

Working with our state, county and

local partners: the New Jersey State Agricultural Development Committee, Mercer County, Hopewell Borough and Township and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program, D&R Greenway secured \$8.0 million in public funding. The remaining \$3.0 million needed to be raised from private sources.

As of March 5, 2007, over \$2,900,000 has been raised privately, in cash and pledges. This includes a \$1,000,000 commitment from the Willard T.C. Johnson Foundation, Inc. a \$100,000 commitment from Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, a \$50,000 commitment from the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association and a \$60,000 donation from Bristol-Myers Squibb.

According to Linda Mead, executive director of D&R Greenway Land Trust, "Based on the outpouring of support from the community, I feel confident announcing that, as this edition of *Greenways* goes to press, D&R Green-  
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## Land Preservation Update

As of March 5, 2007, D&R Greenway Land Trust has led the preservation of 9,393 acres valued at \$213.8 million consisting of 171 properties.

## Inside

- Special Section: The St. Michael's Preservation Project
- The Rocky Brook Greenway: D&R Greenway is working with officials to create this 584-acre Greenway in Millstone Township and Roosevelt Borough
- Stewardship Spotlight: Kate's Trail
- 2006 Preservation Landscape
- Thank You to ...  
The 2006 Taplin Circle  
Our 2006 Partners in Preservation and Business Partners in Preservation
- Upcoming Events at the Johnson Education Center
- *Celebrate Open Space!*  
June 9, 2007



*A view of the St. Michael's land from the high point on the property. Hopewell Borough can be seen in the background.*

way *will* be able to raise the remaining \$100,000 and have the funds required to purchase the St. Michael's land."

### Why Save St. Michael's?

The St. Michael's property encompasses a wide variety of environmental resources, wildlife habitat and prime agricultural soils. The 337-acre property encompasses 200 acres of open land and fields currently managed as productive farmland. Fallow fields and floodplains provide grassland, hedgerow, and shrubland habitats for many species of birds, some of which are threatened and endangered.

The remaining 137 acres consist of mature trees that restore oxygen to the air and support the collection of ground water into aquifers, contributing to the fight to mitigate the effects of global warming on a local level. The Bedens Brook and its four tributaries cross the property, providing over 20 acres of scenic stream corridor leading to the D&R Canal, an important source of drinking water to our region.

### The Threat of Development

Given current zoning regulations in Hopewell, the St. Michael's land could easily play host to 150 houses. This would have a devastating impact on the life of the community. Traffic and congestion would increase dramatically. Education and other municipal costs would multiply in order to meet the needs of 150 additional families. A less likely, but legally permissible worst case scenario would see the site developed as a "hamlet"; this would mean that up to 1,020 homes could be built, including provisions for up to 76,000 square feet of office or commercial space. Accord-



*The members of the St. Michael's Preservation Committee lead a walk through the property, November 2006.*

ing to the 2000 U.S. Census, Hopewell Borough consists of 813 households. Development under a hamlet designation would more than double the existing number of households, completely transforming the lifestyle the residents of this historic village enjoy today.

### People Working Together

Faced with the frightening prospect of unwanted development, in the summer of 2006, a group of concerned Hopewell Borough and Township residents stepped forward to work with D&R Greenway to raise the remaining funds required to preserve the St. Michael's land. In addition to Chair Leslie Davis Potter, the St. Michael's Preservation Committee includes: Ray Disch, Katherine Dresdner, Stephanie and Bob Harris, Lucia and Charlie Huebner, Christine Lokhammer, Judy and Oye Olukotun, Jamie Sapoch, Lori Saporito and Dave Reynolds. Mayor David Nettles and David Knights represent the Borough

and Mayor Vanessa Sandom and David Sandahl represent the Township.

The St. Michael's Preservation Committee's campaign began in September at the Hopewell Harvest Festival where the community was first made aware of the threat to develop the St Michael's land. This group organized six walking tours of the property to acquaint their friends and neighbors with the land. Benefits were hosted in private homes to close the funding gap. A 20-foot "Save St. Michael's" banner was hung across Broad Street, the main thoroughfare of Hopewell Borough.

Members of the committee organized a number of successful fundraising events, including the Kate Taylor Concert at the Off-Broadstreet Theatre, a wine tasting and hors d'oeuvre reception at The Brothers Moon that featured a silent auction, a family Barn Dance at the Hopewell Elementary School and two musical events at Music Together.

Letters to the editors of local newspapers were written by committee members and the papers did more than print them. There were six feature stories about the St. Michael's Preservation Project in *The Hopewell Valley News*, including three cover stories. The editor also dedicated a special section of each week's edition in January and February to publicizing fundraising events and she provided strong editorial endorsement of the St. Michael's project. *The New York Times*, *The Trenton Times*, *The Princeton Packet*, *Time Off* (the weekly entertainment and arts section of *Packet Publications*) and *Town Topics* also provided significant coverage.

The St. Michael's Preservation Committee continues to this moment to be

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*The Bedens Brook and its tributaries flow through the St. Michael's property.*

tireless in their efforts to realize the vision of saving the St. Michael's land from development.

**Preserving the St. Michael's Property is Just the Beginning; Additional Funds Will Help Realize the Land's Full Potential**

D&R Greenway will be able to meet the contract purchase price to acquire the St. Michael's land for \$11.0 million from the Catholic Diocese; however, we will need to raise additional funds to realize our vision for the land and to create the kind of asset that the community deserves and expects.

First and foremost, D&R Greenway will continue to farm St. Michael's. As it has been since Hopewell was settled over 300 years ago, the land will continue to be used for productive farming.

With additional funding, D&R Greenway can provide for sustainable agricultural methods that integrate well with conservation principles. Options and partnerships are being explored for organic farming and raising of livestock, such as grass-fed beef, that might be pastured on the hillside. The resulting produce and meat could be made available for purchase. Low-impact agricultural practices could include minimal tillage, contour farming, buffers along streams to protect water quality and planting of native grasses and hay crops. These uses can be symbiotic with providing grassland habitat for threatened and endangered birds such as Bobolinks, Meadow larks, grassland species of sparrows, and Northern Harriers and American Kestrels. Creating community gardens would offer educational and recreational opportunities. A model of farming practices can be developed for replication by



*An aerial view of farm fields on the St. Michael's land.*

other farmers and landowners in New Jersey, demonstrating the viability of combining agriculture and conservation into a primarily suburban landscape.

Left in its natural state, the property's wooded acres would support biodiversity and a healthier environment, safeguarding water resources and wildlife habitat; however, these non-agricultural open space acres could also provide a wealth of recreational opportunities. With additional funding, six miles of trails could be created through the natural landscape and along stream corridors, for walking, horseback riding and nature study. Wintertime cross-country skiing would offer magnificent views across this Revolutionary landscape. Picnic areas and benches at key vantage points would provide places for families and friends to gather, and for individuals to contemplate the beauty of

the land. The St. Michael's land could, in time, become the hub for a regional trail network linking to Princeton, Pennington, and the Sourlands. Our goal for the conservation areas is to protect the wildlife associated with agriculture and woodlands, and to connect people to the landscape. What an amazing resource and benefit for the residents of community!

**By purchasing and preserving St. Michael's, D&R Greenway will ...**

- Protect a beautiful historic agricultural viewscape that contributes to the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Historic District.
- Conserve water and other natural resources.
- Prevent additional traffic from clogging already-congested roads and polluting the air.
- Continue land use practices that maintain the present-day charm and character of a Revolutionary-era village.

**By continuing to raise additional funds, D&R Greenway could...**

- Support sustainable farming that will supply fresh, locally-grown products to the community.
- Provide recreation and education opportunities for the residents of Hopewell Valley and surrounding communities.
- Provide stewardship in perpetuity.

Please continue to support the St. Michael's Preservation Project. For more information, or to make a contribution, please contact Sophie Glover at 609-924-4646 or [sglover@drgreenway.org](mailto:sglover@drgreenway.org).

