

Open Space Trust Fund Town Hall

What are we solving for and why?

- ❑ Community requests and needs exceed the existing funding pool for capital projects.
- ❑ The Village Council has aggressively prioritized updating “existing” infrastructure (Baird, Library, Roads, etc.) putting limitations on new initiatives.
- ❑ Escalating costs have resulted in other initiatives being pushed down the priority list.
- ❑ In order to expedite projects and ensure future funding, the Village Council is evaluating options to its Open Space Trust Fund.
- ❑ The Village Council is expecting that there will be limited federal funding over the next four years that will be available for environmental/sustainability community investments that would come from appropriations through congress, and pass throughs from the DEP, HUD (community development block grants), and DOT.

Open Space Trust Fund

Background

- ❑ There are 5 permitted uses for Open Space Trust in South Orange
 1. Acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes
 2. Development of lands acquired for conservation purposes
 3. Maintenance of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes
 4. Historic preservation and/or acquisition of historic properties & objects
 5. Payment of debt service on indebtedness issued or incurred for any of these purposes

- ❑ Original \$0.01 OSTF tax instituted in 1999; subsequent 2006 effort to increase OSTF tax failed

Open Space Trust Fund 2025 Overview

OSTF Revenue, Balance and Expenditures for 2025

- ❑ Current: 1 cent per \$100 of assessed value
- ❑ \$428,000 collected in 2024
- ❑ Current Fund Balance (earmarked and will be utilized): \$1,580,000.00
 - ❑ \$1.025 Million as our Matching Funds for Cameron Recreation Area Grant
 - ❑ \$90k for Baird Debt Service
 - ❑ \$50k for Tree Planting in parks

Open Space Trust Fund 2025

➤ Recommendation: Increase OSTF for 2025

- From \$.01 to \$.02 cents per \$100 of assessed value

Rationale:

- ❑ Eligible Current and Future Initiatives based on long term capital planning estimate totals **over \$20,000,000**
- ❑ Every \$50,000 in our OSTF could be utilized to authorize \$1MM in new debt. Ongoing debt service payments on authorized debt would vary.
- ❑ Capital Improvements to our Parks are essential and this will increase the dedicated funding source to allow for more parks improvements and initiatives.

Revenue Generated by the OSTF

Average Assessed Home Value	OSTF Rate (per \$100)	Average Monthly Cost	Annual OSTF Revenue Generated	Debt Authorization Options
\$ 879,273.03	.01	\$ 7.33	\$ 428,000	\$50,000 Down Payment to Authorize \$1,000,000
\$ 879,273.03	.02	\$14.66	\$ 856,000	\$180,000 Down Payment to Authorize \$3,600,000

Open Space Trust Fund

☐ Eligible Current and Future Initiatives

Capital Plan - Eligible Initiatives			
Current Initiatives	Status	Current Initiatives	Status
Greenway Project	Bids Received	ADA Inclusive Playground	Requested
Lights - New Waterlands Park	Completed 2025	River Dredging	Waiting on Army Corp
Cameron Recreation Area Improvements	In Design	Meadowland Park Master Plan and Implementation	Requested
Meadowlands Sport Field Improvements and Lights	Requested	New Waterlands Playground Replacement	Requested
Farrell Field Court Improvements	Requested	Chyzowych Field Improvements	Requested
Park Signage	Partially In Progress	New Waterlands Field and Pathway Improvements	Requested
Tree planting in parks & adjacent berms	In Progress	Spiotta Park Improvements	Requested
Crest Drive Playground Replacement	Phase 1- 2025 Capital	Farrell Field Park Improvements	Requested
Duck Pond Improvements	Phase 1- 2025 Capital	Boz Way Pathway Improvements	Requested
Grove Park Improvements	Phase 1 - 2025 Capital	LED Light Upgrades in Parks	Requested
Founders Park Improvements	Phase 1 - Existing Funds	Capital Upgrades at Various Fields	Requested

OSTF Town Hall 7-24-25

Open Space Trust Fund

❑ Current Cost Estimates

Capital Improvements	Cost Estimate
Founders Park Capital Improvements	\$ 4,250,000
Meadowland Sport Field Lighting	\$ 1,200,000
Farrell Field Court Capital Improvements	\$ 500,000
Chyzowych Field Capital Improvements	\$ 1,500,000
Crest Drive Playground Replacement	\$ 250,000
ADA Inclusive Playground	\$1,500,000
Duck Pond Capital Improvements	\$ 2,250,000
Grove Park Capital Improvements	\$ 2,500,000
New Waterland Playground Replacement	\$ 250,000
Meadowland Park Master Plan	\$ 100,000
Cameron Baseball Field Lighting Capital Upgrades to LED	\$ 750,000

OSTF Town Hall 7-24-25

Current Conceptual Renderings



Founders Park Playground



Founders Park Playground



Founders Park Flag



Founders Park Overview



Cameron Recreation Area



Cameron Recreation Area Garden



Grove Park Conceptual Plan

Open Space Trust Fund

Next Steps:

- ❑ Solicit robust community feedback
 - 3rd Town Hall October 2025 - TBA
- ❑ Referendum: OSTF increase must be approved by referendum
 - Village Council to determine whether to proceed with referendum
 - Submit resolution to County Clerk – August 2025
 - Public Communication (ongoing) and 2nd Town Hall (September)
 - Ballot question - November, 2025
 - If successful – increase becomes effective 2026

OSTF Advisory Committee

- ❑ If the ballot initiative is successful the Mayor will appoint members to an advisory committee to make recommendations for use of the OSTF.

- ❑ The ideal committee structure will include but not be limited to:
 - a. A Governing Body Liaison
 - b. A representative from each park conservancy
 - i. Farrell Field Conservancy
 - ii. Founders Park Conservancy
 - iii. Meadowland Park Conservancy
 - iv. Montrose Park Historic/Grove Park
 - c. A representative from each Village sponsored sport committee
 - d. A representative from the Environmental Commission
 - e. A representative from the Historic Preservation Commission
 - f. The Director of Recreation and Cultural Affairs
 - g. Village Administration

Previous OSTF Projects

- \$6,702,000 collected since 1999
- \$5,120,000 expended Prior projects:
 - Recycling Studies
 - Greenway Phase 1 - Studies and construction
 - Greenway Phase 2 - Studies and plan development
 - Connett Building - New roof and exterior renovation plans
 - Duck Pond - Restoration & improvement plans
 - Rahway River - Restoration and improvements
 - Baird Center Renovations - Feasibility Study & Debt Payments
 - Tennis Courts - Resurfacing
 - Shade Tree: Arborist Fees, Tree Replacement and Plantings
 - Carter Park - Upgrades
 - Various - Benches
 - Playing Fields - Maintenance and Equipment
 - New Waterlands Lights
 - Cameron Recreation Area - Design and environmental testing

Questions?