

NATIRAR COUNTY PARK MASTER PLAN

SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
OCTOBER 2005



Prepared for the Somerset County Park Commission



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PLAN CONTEXT



Introduction

The Natirar County Park Master Plan documents the planning process and its outcome for the future development of Natirar. The 500 acre tract is located in the Somerset Hills section of Somerset County within three municipalities – Bedminster Township, Far Hills Borough, and Peapack/Gladstone Borough. Purchased in 2002 from the estate of the King of Morocco, the tract has buildings representing both the agrarian settlement in the Somerset Hills and the estate development in the early 1900s by Walter G. and Kate Macy Ladd. With both the North Branch of the Raritan River and Peapack Brook within the tract, the property provides a unique environmental setting with opportunities for fishing, trails and equestrian facilities. The existing buildings also provide opportunities for reuse in ways compatible with the cultural resources and setting of the tract.

The Natirar main house and related outbuildings on the upper plateau of the tract in Peapack/Gladstone have been leased for an exclusive spa – the Virgin Spa at Natirar. The remainder of the tract will be retained by the County as a public park that will preserve and maintain the unique resources of the property in a manner that will be compatible with surrounding communities and will be consistent with the goals and objectives established for the Natirar Park Plan.

The Natirar Park Plan is organized in the following manner. First the refined goals and objectives for the Park as identified through the yearlong park planning process with the representative Advisory Committee are presented. These goals and objectives reflect an understanding of the unique resources of the site, its surroundings and the needs of the public. The planning context section reviews the state, county and local planning documents. The landscape setting provides an overview of key tract features – the landscape, landforms, water features, etc. that provide the framework for development of the site. The natural resources on the property – water, wetlands, floodplain, soils, geology, threatened and endangered species, etc. are identified and primary restrictions and opportunities are noted. The cultural resources section documents the historic buildings and districts such as the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District, which comprise the Far Hills Farm section of the tract. A complete survey of all buildings on Natirar (excluding the Virgin Spa lease area) provides the underpinnings for evaluating future building uses and costs. Finally transportation conditions and infrastructure are evaluated. In addition to field research, this report utilizes the initial 2002 Natirar Report¹ and other available studies and data as a basis for part of this inventory and these prior documents are incorporated herein by reference.

The planning process and an assessment of alternatives details a review of possible programming options for Natirar. Case studies are presented of successful park facilities. The Plan then details the proposed site development plan and potential building uses that are appropriate for the site. An Action Plan details the next steps for the Phase 1 opening of the Park which is expected to be concurrent with the Virgin Spa at Natirar opening. The Action Plan also details the planning activities needed to finalize the site development program.

¹ *Natirar, A Study of the Estate of the King of Morocco*, prepared by the Somerset County Park Commission, The Natirar Association, Inc, the RBA Group, the Upper Raritan Watershed Association, October 2002.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives have been identified for development of the Natirar County Park. These are based upon the unique environmental and cultural resources on the tract and the need to protect and enhance these resources while ensuring compatibility with municipal plans, respecting local needs and meeting County needs to provide public access to these special resources in a fitting manner. These goals and objectives have been refined through the planning process as detailed below:

Goals

- Preserve landscapes – stewardship
- Preserve critical environmental resources
- Provide regional recreation experiences
- Serve county's population centers and unmet regional recreation needs
- Enhance the quality of life

Objectives

- **Plan recreation opportunities that are compatible with surrounding land use and appropriate to the historic cultural setting**
 - Use the site for a venue for cultural, visual arts and equestrian activities.
 - o Provide opportunities for special events programming.
 - o Provide equestrian related facilities such as cross county equestrian schooling to augment area facilities.
 - o Utilize existing structures as venues for not-for-profit groups and services that are supportive or complementary to the cultural context of Natirar.
 - o Develop a venue for arts and crafts programming through utilization of the larger barns facilities.
 - Limit development activities in the Peapack and Virgin Spa viewsheds easements to maintain the scenic character of site.
 - Create special activity areas within the Park reflective of the unique environmental and cultural conditions.
- **Preserve Natirar's cultural resources**
 - Undertake immediate stabilization of critical historic buildings.
 - Develop plan for renovation/stabilization.
 - Preserve the historic fabric through adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
 - Undertake a cultural landscape evaluation and develop a cultural landscape preservation plan.
 - Consider National and State Register of Historic Places listing of the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District to provide additional funding opportunities.
- **Use Natirar's cultural resources for public education**
 - Create a visitor experience of a Somerset County estate.
 - Provide the experience of the historic rural and agrarian past.
 - Undertake additional research to guide targeted education and interpretation.
- **Develop an educational program that builds on the many unique natural attributes of Natirar**
 - Consider a program of "green building" to encourage energy saving and as an educational laboratory.
 - Incorporate design elements (interpretive signs, handouts, plantings) to educate visitor on wetlands and geology.
 - o Focus on unique geologic attributes of the site and the wider landscape.
 - o Use as a laboratory for a progressive ecological restoration plan to enhance wetlands and restore grassland habitats.
 - o Demonstrate progressive land use management through use of bioswales and constructed wetlands to treat stormwater runoff that can have educational benefits.
 - o Assess where emergent wetlands may allow preservation or creation of vernal habitat as an educational opportunity.
 - Encourage fishing as a recreational opportunity in the Peapack Brook and the North Branch.

-
- **Coordinate with local and county greenway and trails plans**
 - Provide greenways along Peapack Brook and the North Branch linked to the regional system.
 - Provide trails and walks throughout the park.
 - Develop interconnections to Peapack and Gladstone Borough
 - Develop a hierarchy of trails with related educational components and ability levels.
 - Augment and enhance the equestrian trail network in coordination with local interest groups.
 - Consider bicycle facilities needs both on-site and as part of the County bike network.
 - Evaluate bicycle compatible roads and assess needed improvements for the area.

Park Planning Approach

Natirar Advisory Committee

Natirar Advisory Committee was appointed by the Somerset County Board of Freeholders to assist in the development of the Natirar County Park Plan. The Advisory Committee comprised thirteen members including representatives from the three host municipalities, Bedminster Township, Far Hills Borough, Peapack/ Gladstone Borough, three public members, the Upper Raritan Watershed Association, the County Cultural and Heritage Commission, the County Park Commissioner, two County Freeholders and the County Parks Director. The Advisory Committee meetings were open to the public. Numerous Advisory Committee meetings were held during the course of the project. The Committee Members also conducted a visit to the Natirar site.

The Consultant Team was lead by Maser Consulting, P.A. ((Maser) in association with Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects, LCC (FMG) and the Cultural Resources Consulting Group (CRCG).

Park Planning Process

The Natirar Park planning process is summarized as follows:

- **Inventory and Assessment Phase**
 - Set Goals and Objectives
 - Identify preliminary issues and concerns
 - Assess local and regional planning influences
 - Evaluate Natirar tract
 - Building survey
 - Cultural resources investigation
 - Natural conditions assessment
 - Transportation Infrastructure
 - Constraints and opportunities
- **Programming Ideas Phase**
 - Identify initial program areas
 - Consider examples /case studies of effective similar property development
 - Assess alternatives
 - Survey and rank programming ideas
- **Initial Concept Plan Recommendations**
 - Consider building use options
 - Review site programming areas
- **Refinement of Concept Plan Phase**
 - Assess building improvement costs
 - Consider development phasing
 - Develop Action Plan
- **Final Natirar Plan**

Planning Context

Somerset County Parks and Recreation Plan

The Master Plan for the Somerset County Park system is based on five fundamental goals and their associated objectives. These goals and objectives are intended to be used to evaluate the appropriateness of specific proposals for County parks. The Natirar County Park site can fulfill all of these goals and objectives.

The Natirar site exemplifies the primary goal of preserving landscapes of the highest scenic value in the County. Natirar exhibits a significant variety of aesthetic landscape features of land, water, vegetation and manmade artifacts that would make the experience of a visit to this County Park memorable. As a supplement to this goal, the County plan expanded the traditional purview of the Somerset County Park Commission to include the stewardship of some of the County's historic heritage. The County Park Plan recognizes preservation efforts can include partnership with the private sector to restore, operate and administer the historic and cultural treasures of the County. The concept of partnering with the private sector is being achieved at Natirar with the unique arrangement with Virgin Atlantic to lease the Natirar main house and almost 90 acres of surrounding grounds allowing for its costly renovation and its adaptive reuse and expansion as a world class spa. This provides an opportunity for County residents to enjoy this unique attraction consistent with its bucolic setting.

As the largest public landholder in Somerset County, the County Park system plays a substantial role in preserving critical environmental features especially important to the County's hydrogeologic system through the network of wetlands, flood plains and the North Branch of the Raritan River which flows through the Natirar site.

The County Park System is intended to provide, through its varied types of parks, a diverse mix of recreational experiences appropriate to the County's regional perspective. Unlike a municipal park system, the County seeks larger acreage tracts with amenity value, usually a mix of woods, fields and water, to provide a naturalistic setting for recreational facilities of a regional nature. County parks should give equal balance to recreation and conservation. The Somerset County park system is focused on providing active and passive recreation facilities requiring large land resources such as nature walks, equestrian facilities or regulation golf or an unusual recreation facility beyond the staff or fiscal capability of any one municipality such as an environmental center or a sculpture garden. The Natirar site has the area and bucolic qualities for a premiere County Park. The challenge is to find for the Natirar County Park those active and passive recreation activities that truly fit the County's particular role and are appropriate for this particular setting.

Goal four emphasizes that County parks should be placed where they serve the greatest population concentrations in the County. Natirar was acquired not only because of its unusual historic, cultural and landscape qualities, but it also makes available a park in an area of the County heretofore unserved by a conveniently located County park. In determining what recreation facilities would be appropriate for Natirar County Park, some regard should be made for the unmet recreation needs of residents within a 10 to 15 minute drive time of this park.

The final goal of providing open space, which enhances the quality of life in Somerset County, may seem somewhat vague but is relevant to the Natirar site. In the criteria used to evaluate achievement of this goal, the County Plan states, *"the acquisition of the open space setting of a cultural or historical site can stabilize its surroundings, retaining its property values and assuring that future changes will not substantially clash or distract from the enjoyment of viewing these physical structures much as they appeared in the past"*. Natirar County Park with its size and prominent location along a half mile of Peapack Road frontage allows all of us to enjoy an open space vista, which is disappearing with the suburban development of Somerset County.

Somerset County Master Plan

The *1987 Somerset County Master Plan* and related studies were reviewed to assess planning goals for the Natirar area. The Master Plan documents the County's goal for general development. The Plan uses existing settlement patterns and major highway corridors to focus future development. Related to the Natirar property, the Somerset County Land Use Management Map identified a band along Route 512 as part of the growth management area between the two community settlements of Peapack and Gladstone and Far Hills. Growth management areas include established and emerging residential areas and a wide variety of businesses that are served or planned to be served

with public facilities. Within the growth management area, development is anticipated, but should be sensitive to environmental conditions, available infrastructure and access. The intensity of development will depend on the character of the area, development controls and the ability to accommodate development.

The corridor along the North Branch of the Raritan River from Route 512 north which includes part of the Natirar is shown as Open Space. This identifies the stream corridor and floodplain as critical environmental resources which can potentially serve as a connecting linkage and have both aesthetic and/or recreation value. The goal is to avoid environmental damage and to protect and preserve these areas.

The remainder of Natirar in Peapack and Gladstone is in a Rural Preservation Area as part of the Upper Raritan Watershed. According to the Somerset County Master Plan, *"The purpose of this category is to preserve a rural land use pattern in the open portions of the County and to protect natural resources and the open character of the area Uses such as agricultural operations, large-lot single-family, estate type planned development, spacious institutional open space oriented uses are strongly encouraged"* (Page 59-60).

The 1992 Somerset County Scenic Corridor and Roadway Study identifies Route 512 (Pottersville Road/Main Street/Peapack Road) from Route 206 (Peapack and Gladstone) to Route 202 (Far Hills) as a preliminary scenic roadway. An important consideration would be to minimize visual impacts of development by carefully siting building lots and roads to maintain the prime viewsheds from the road and to conserve the rural landscape.

New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan

As shown on the adopted 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan, Policy Planning and Resource Management Map, Natirar is located in the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (PA5), which is defined as:

"The Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area contains large contiguous land areas with valuable ecosystems, geological features and wildlife habitats particularly in the Delaware Bay and other estuary areas, the Highlands Region, and coastal area."

The 2004 Preliminary Plan Draft Cross Acceptance Report (January 2005) prepared by Somerset County in coordination with the County municipalities continues to show Natirar in PA5 with the exception of the lots in Far Hills, which are shown as PA6, Parks and Recreation Area reflecting Somerset County ownership.

Highlands Special Resource Planning Area

The Natirar tract is located within the Highlands Planning Area, but not in the Highlands Preservation Area; therefore, current Highland's rulemaking will not affect the development of the project site. There are no established regulations or controls over this planning area as currently defined by the Highlands Water Resources and Planning Act.

Municipal Master Plans

Master Plans for the three municipalities were reviewed to identify planning objectives relative to this tract and the surrounding area and open space and recreation planning needs that may be considerations in development of Natirar.

Bedminster

The Natirar property in Bedminster Township is shown as public lands on the 2003 Bedminster Land Use Plan. It was previously in the R-3 zone, which required a minimum of three (3) acre lots. The 2003 Bedminster Township Greenway Plan shows a 'Primary Greenway' along Peapack Brook. The North Branch is shown as a scenic watercourse in the Scenic Corridors Map.

Bedminster considers the bridle trail network fundamental to maintaining the equestrian way of life. The Township supports efforts to create new trail linkages and expansion of equestrian opportunities (Master Plan, Page 258). This is supported by similar recommendations in the Far Hills and Peapack and Gladstone Master Plans.

Bedminster municipal parks and recreation facilities are concentrated in the easterly portion of the Township in the Bedminster Village/Pluckemin area and no parks and recreation improvements are recommended for this area. The proposed North Branch Greenway extends from Peapack and Gladstone and Far Hills southward along the North

Branch to Bridgewater Township. Bedminster has targeted in their Recreation and Open Space System Plan the areas along Peapack Brook including that section of Natirar for open space acquisition.

Far Hills

The *2003 Far Hills Recreation Plan* Element identifies significant recreational facilities in the Borough including the Fairgrounds, Bucks Garden, the Pond and Moorland Farms. The Fairgrounds, which is Borough owned open space, includes a number of active recreational facilities and a walking trail along the North Branch of the Raritan River. The Recreation Plan indicates that the Fairgrounds active recreation facilities seem adequate to address current population growth. Moorland Farms, which is home to the Far Hills Race Meeting Association, sponsors heavily attended sporting events such as the Far Hills Race Meeting and the Midland Run. The need to preserve Moorland Farms is considered a high priority in the Recreation Plan.

The *2003 Far Hills Master Plan* provides useful information on the historic bridle trail network in the Somerset Hills area. The bridle trails are considered an integral part of the equestrian heritage of the Somerset Hills way of life and a "priceless resource that enables truly unique recreational, social and cultural opportunities and supports an equestrian way of life for the Borough's residents and its neighbors". The Master Plan notes sections of the bridle trail network have been compromised by fragmentation and disuse. The Master Plan stresses the need to assist in the creation of new trail linkages within the existing network and to expand riding opportunities including links to other trails in adjoining communities. It states that a "bridle trails plan should be developed in coordination with equestrian groups in the Somerset Hills area and that partnerships should be formed to maintain the trails" (Page 67- 68).

Peapack and Gladstone

The *2002 Combined Conservation and Recreation Plan Elements of the Peapack and Gladstone Master Plan* was reviewed to identify planning goals, objectives and recommendations that should be considered in the planning of Natirar. The Conservation Plan section describes a planned greenways system which links open space and forest lands and creates a greenbelt around Peapack and Gladstone. As shown, the northwestern section of Natirar is within this greenbelt. Natirar's purchase by the County further supports Peapack and Gladstone's high priority for conservation to maintain a buffer around the two historic villages.

The *2004 Recreation Plan* identifies a proposed trails network focused along the North Branch of the Raritan River over its entire length and along the Peapack Brook stream corridors. The southern section of the trail plan includes a trail connection along Peapack Road (Main Street) near the intersection of the North Branch and heading north along the Natirar frontage connecting to municipal owned properties in the vicinity of the sewage treatment plant and garage and then continuing along Peapack Brook. As shown in the *Recreation Plan Map*, this trail system will provide a link to municipal developed recreation facilities and can extend to trails outside of the municipality. The *Recreation Plan* also encourages a pedestrian trails system of inland trails or sidewalks along public streets to provide better pedestrian access through the Borough.

Other recommendations in the *2002 Conservation and Recreation Plan Elements* included: "Preserve, enhance and improve the trails, both bridle and pedestrian, existing through the Borough of Peapack and Gladstone; provide for a signage system for the demarcation of the trails; and establish a design standard for all new trails" (Page 29).

As noted in the *2002 Master Plan*, based upon *New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* standards, between 12.16 and 14.60 acres of active recreation space is required. The Plan also identified a need for active recreational facilities; however, the Borough has indicated that active recreation facilities at Natirar are not recommended.

The *2004 Periodic Reexamination Report* Prepared for Discussion Purposes (dated September 2004) identifies two potential nuisance problems: excessive and/or not very well designed lighting and noise that could interfere with the quality of life for the residents of the Borough (Page 30). These elements will be considered in the Natirar design phase.

Zoning

As a County Park facility, zoning regulations do not apply. However, it is useful to understand the underlying zoning on the Natirar site and its compatibility with the proposed park use. It should be noted that parks are principal uses in Bedminster and Far Hills. Municipal lands used for public purpose are also permitted in Peapack and Gladstone.

Bedminster Township

Natirar is located in the P Public zone, which is established to include lands owned by Bedminster Township, Somerset County or the State of New Jersey. It permits public parks and recreation, open space, conservation uses, public schools, municipal uses, environmental centers and historical interpretation centers. A minimum lot size of ten (10) acres is required. The development intensity is low with an FAR of 3% and an overall lot coverage of 5%. The Far Hills Farm property in Bedminster abuts the R-1 zone which permits single family detached dwellings on a minimum of one (1) acre lots and many other public purpose uses such as parks, conservation areas, farms, houses of worship, public and private day schools, private boarding schools and open air clubs among other permitted uses. Seven private residential properties in Bedminster are adjacent to Natirar.

Far Hills Borough

In Far Hills, Natirar is located in the R-10 Low Density Residential zone. Principal permitted uses include single-family detached dwellings, farm and agricultural uses and parks and playgrounds. The minimum lot area is 10 acres. Eight large lots including two properties off Sunnybranch Road are adjacent to Natirar in Far Hills.

Peapack and Gladstone Borough

Natirar is located in the RE Rural Estate Zone. The purpose of this zone is to protect the natural and estate character of this area, to preserve the rural character of the environment of the Borough and the beauty of the area among other purposes. Principal permitted uses include single-family detached dwellings, agriculture, horticulture, silviculture and equestrian uses and municipally owned and operated buildings, structures and land uses for public purpose. A number of conditional uses including Private Recreation Facilities are permitted. The minimum lot size is five (5) acres in the RE zone.

The RR-2 and RR-3 zones abut Natirar to the north and the R-18 Zone is located on the Peapack Road/Main Street frontage. The RR-2 zone permits minimum two (2) acre lots such as those fronting on Ramapo Way and Oratam Drive. The RR-3 zone permits single-family lots on a minimum of three (3) acre lots. The R-18 zone permits single-family lots with a minimum lot size of 18,000 square feet. There are nine (9) properties located in the RR-2 zone and three (3) in the RR-3 zone and one (1) in the R-18 that adjoin the northern boundary of Natirar. Across Peapack Road from Natirar, there are five residential properties and two farms.

Restrictions

Virgin Spa Lease Agreement

Somerset County has entered into a 99-year lease agreement with Virgin Spa at Natirar to utilize 89 acres of the Estate including the main estate buildings along the hilltop. Access to the Virgin Spa will be on a joint driveway through the County park property from Peapack Road. Emergency access only is proposed for the Virgin Spa to Highland Avenue.

The lease agreement has certain restrictions on the use of the County park property, which may affect future programming. A 200 feet wide-open space easement is provided along each side of the main driveway; however, trails, driveways, fences, parking and "the like" are permitted within this easement.

A viewshed easement runs from the rear of the Natirar Main House southward. This easement restricts development to maintain the scenic views from the Virgin Spa across the landscape to the southeast including portions of the lower open field in Peapack and Gladstone (the Cow Meadow and the Far Hills tract (the Hay Barn area). The viewshed easement is shown on the Study Area Map.

Peapack and Gladstone Borough Site Restrictions

As part of the Peapack and Gladstone Borough approval process for the Virgin Spa at Natirar, the County has agreed to institute certain restrictions including no active recreational facilities such as soccer, baseball fields, basketball courts, roller hockey rinks or the like. This initial Master Plan shall recommend for the portions of the property that is located within the Borough of Far Hills, that the Park will be used for passive recreation and conservation purposes such as walking, jogging, hiking, fishing, horseback riding and the like. Farming shall also be an allowable activity under this Master Plan as a part of farmland preservation and historic preservation as defined in N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.1.

As a part of the approval process, the County has agreed to maintain a viewshed easement along the east side of Peapack Road encompassing approximately 32 acres. The purpose of the easement will be to restrict the construction of any new buildings or active athletic facilities in this viewshed area. Additionally as part of the viewshed restriction, there will be no soil disturbance or removal in the easement area that would materially change the existing condition or topography of that area. There are exceptions to these restrictions that permit the construction of the gate facilities, driveway widening and relocation and utility relocation as required as well as new fencing, trails or paths that may transverse that portion of the easement area.

The Resolution of Approval has also provided that the County will provide a viewshed easement in favor of the Borough of Peapack and Gladstone which shall be coincident with that portion of the 104-acre viewshed easement granted to The Virgin Spa at Natirar which is located within Peapack and Gladstone Borough. Additionally, the County will offer a viewshed easement to the Borough of Far Hills over the portions of the 104-acre viewshed easement located within the Borough of Far Hills. The purpose of that viewshed easement will be to restrict the construction of any new buildings, structures or improvements to be located within the viewshed corridor and shall further restrict significant removal or disturbance of any soil within the easement area, provided, however, that the viewshed easement shall not restrict improvements related to (1) equestrian activities; (2) parking nodes as may be required for any park activity within the area (parking nodes shall be defined as a total of five parking spaces, one of which shall be handicap); (3) fencing; (4) temporary structures or facilities that may be erected for any park activity or events that occur within the viewshed areas.

Lighting in Peapack and Gladstone shall be limited to lighting in the proposed shared parking lot for the Virgin Spa Application; (2) any existing lighting may continue to exist so long as said existing lighting shall be a concealed source type and not create sky glow; and (3) lighting required for security purposes is permitted by the Resolution of Approval provided, however, that such lighting shall be a concealed source and shall not contribute to sky glow. Any additional lighting proposal for the County Park at Natirar in the Borough of Peapack and Gladstone shall be subject to the standards made a part of the Virgin Spa Application approval and shall be installed by the County of Somerset only upon consultation with the Borough governing body and/or Land Use Board upon a showing that additional lighting is necessary to further purposes of the Park as expressed herein and as minimal amount of light as is necessary for that purposes.

The Resolution of Approval provides that this Master Plan, once adopted by the Somerset County Park Commission and accepted by the Freeholder Board, will not be modified unless the Borough of Peapack and Gladstone, through its governing body and/or Land Use Board, are provided notice and that said notice shall be published in the newspaper of record for Peapack/Gladstone at that time, concerning any proposed review and/or modification of this Master Plan and a hearing shall be held with regards to the review or modifications of the Master Plan, at which time representatives of the Borough of Peapack and Gladstone governing body and/or Land Use Board shall be authorized and permitted to participate and to provide information and/or objections to any reexamination of this Natirar County Park Master Plan.

The Resolution of Approval also provides that the management of the Natirar County Park shall be subject to the Somerset County Park Commission rules and regulations. No modification to said rules and regulations as it affects the County Park at Natirar shall be made unless the County of Somerset establishes that said modification of the rules and regulations as they affect the Natirar are necessary to implement the uses permitted therein and that said modifications of the rules and regulations are the minimal modifications necessary to accomplish that purpose. The Resolution provides and the County has agreed that before any of its current rules and regulations as they may affect

Natirar, can be modified, the representatives of the Borough of Peapack and Gladstone and/or its Land Use Board shall be notified and authorized to participate and provide information or objection to any re-examination or proposed modification of any rule or regulation as it affects Natirar.

Finally, the Resolution of Approval also provides that all activities within the Peapack Gladstone portion of the Natirar County Park shall be limited to occur and the Park itself shall be only open from dawn to dusk.

BACKGROUND FOR PARK PLANNING



The Setting

Location

Natirar is located in three municipalities - Bedminster Township, Far Hills Borough, and Peapack and Gladstone Borough in the Somerset Hills area of Somerset County. Totalling over 491 acres, the property is bisected by Peapack Road (also known as Main Street and County Route 512). All but 33 acres, which are part of the Far Hills Farm tract, are located on the east side of Peapack Road. (See Location Map, Study Area Map, Aerial Photo Map.)

The following table identifies property within each municipality:

NATIRAR TRACT PARCEL SUMMARY

Bedminster Township	Block 19, Lot 2	33.4 Acres
	Block 20, Lot 2	<u>6.6 Acres</u>
		40.0 Acres
Far Hills Borough	Block 6, Lot 9	105.4 Acres
	Block 1, Lot 7	<u>18.2 Acres</u>
		123.7 Acres
Peapack and Gladstone Borough	Block 23, Lot 23.03	5.7 Acres
	Block 23, Lot 23.04	4.4 Acres
	Block 28, Lot 24	<u>317.4 Acres</u>
		327.5 Acres
TOTAL		491.2 Acres

Eighty nine (89) acres in Peapack and Gladstone is under a 99-year lease to Virgin Spa at Natirar. This includes the Natirar main house and secondary estate buildings located on the highest ridge plateau on the Natirar tract. The entrance driveway will be relocated about 260 feet north on Peapack Road to serve both the Virgin Spa and Natirar County Park.

The North Branch of the Raritan River (North Branch) forms the eastern boundary of the Natirar tract separating Peapack and Gladstone and Far Hills. The North Branch is also the boundary between Far Hills and Bedminster. It forms the eastern edge of the 6.6-acre Bedminster tract parcel, which is a narrow strip of land between the North Branch and Peapack Road. The North Branch runs toward the west to the confluence with Peapack Brook near the southern section of the tract at Peapack Road and Old Dutch Road. Peapack Brook parallels the western edge of the 33-acre Far Hills Farm tract in Bedminster.

Peapack Road forms the main access to Natirar with existing driveways serving both the Natirar estate tract (the larger 358 acre tract) on the east side and the Far Hills Farm on the west side of Peapack Road. Natirar has frontage on improved Highland Avenue in Peapack and Gladstone which includes the existing driveway from the Natirar main house (proposed by Virgin Spa for emergency access only). Highland Avenue continues as unimproved right-of-way along northern Natirar boundary grading downward toward the North Branch and Lake Road in Far Hills. There is an overgrown trail along this unimproved section of Highland Avenue. A stone arch bridge (which is not in service) crosses the North Branch and connects to Lake Road at this point. Sunnybranch Road terminates in a cul-de-sac about 400 feet from the southern boundary of Natirar in Far Hills.

There are a number of drives which provide access to the major use areas of the tract. The main entrance drive serves the Natirar main house and will provide access to the northern park tract. There is a drive crossing the North Branch, which provides access to the Fair Hills properties including the Hay Barn area. A River Trail runs along the North Branch up to unimproved Highland Avenue. The North Trail runs along the northern property boundary with secondary access to Peapack Road. A looped driveway currently serves the Far Hills Farm tract on the west side of Peapack Road.

The Study Area Map shows the property boundaries, topography, drives, woodland areas and buildings (excluding those in the leased area). The primary development areas on the tract are identified and are related to historic building groupings such as the Far Hills Farm and Grey Barns complex, the River Terrace along both the North Branch and Peapack Brook, the Hay Barn area in Far Hills and the Cow Meadow in the lower field along the North Branch.

Building Resources

The buildings on Natirar outside of the Virgin Spa lease area were surveyed. The property has a history of settlement as agricultural uses and the Natirar estate activities, which is reflective in the existing structures, the site design elements and the landscape features. Outside of the Virgin Spa leased area, there are 22 buildings primarily within two building complexes. West of Peapack Road is the Far Hills Farm complex, which includes many historic buildings including the Peapack Brook Grist Mill, Elm Cottage, Oak Cottage, the Corn Crib and Red Frame Barn together with other modern farm structures. The Gate House (Tenant House) and Ash Cottage across Peapack Road from Far Hills Farm are part of the Peapack Rural Industrial Historic District complex.

The Grey Barns complex includes three barns and related shed buildings, which were part of an earlier farm complex. The brick incinerator building west of the Grey Barns complex was part of the Natirar estate development. Other historic structures outside of these groupings include the Gate House and the Hay Barn in Far Hills. Other historic remnants from Natirar's estate development add texture and interest to the landscape including the brick gate columns, concrete walls and bridges and the stonewalls.

Natirar's cultural resources are further detailed subsequent sections of this report. An inventory of all buildings (excluding the lease area) is included in the Appendix.

Surrounding Land Uses

With the exception of the Matheny Medical and Educational Center, which is located at the terminus of Highland Avenue across from Natirar, Natirar is surrounded by single-family residential properties including large estate lots and farm properties. The Village of Peapack and Gladstone is located directly north of Natirar. Peapack Road (Main Street) is the primary road through the Village and provides access to shops, limited services and the two train stations.

Land Forms



The Natirar property is located in the southernmost division of the Appalachian Province, known as the Highlands. The Highlands consist of gently sloping to steep uplands containing broad round flat-topped ridges rising 400 to 600 feet above the lowlands to the south. Topography on the site varies with steep slopes tending south and east towards the North Branch and skirting the highest ridge where the

Natirar main house and secondary estate buildings are located. This is the highest point of Natirar at elevation 430 at the reservoir and elevation 388 at the main house. There is almost a 280 feet grade change from the uppermost ridge to the lowest point along the North Branch. A second ridge at the northern part of the property is at elevation 327 with steep wooded slopes forming a narrow corridor between the two ridges. A stone drive provides access through this crossing.

A third ridge is formed on the Far Hills property at the Hay Barn Area at elevation 257 with slopes tending northward to the North Branch. At the Far Hills Farm site across Peapack Road, a fourth lower ridge at elevation 216 is bracketed by Peapack Road and Peapack Brook with very steep slopes tending west to the Peapack Brook along the northern section of this lot.



Flat river terraces band the North Branch and Peapack Brook. These lower areas are partly in wetlands and floodplain. The lower fields along the entrance drive and south of the Natirar main house are very flat open fields with topography of 1-2% grades, which can provide potential opportunities for more active recreation uses. Along Peapack Road north of the main entrance drive, the topography is more gently rising (less than 15%

slopes) towards the ridges, providing rolling landforms. (See Steep Slope Map)

Landscape Palette



The vegetation at Natirar is an important historic landscape element of the development of the Natirar estate. Viewed in its entirety, Natirar is a varied landscape with grassland pastures in the lower sloped areas and mature woodlands along the steep ridge slopes and along the North Branch and Peapack Brook in the wetlands and lowland areas not suitable for farming. Although no historic

landscape plans have been yet located, it is apparent that the current mature plantings have been conceived as part of the estate development. The Natirar entrance drive is defined by a border of London Plane trees forming a canopy and adding visual structure to the drive. Plantings along the North Branch include ornamentals such as rhododendron masses along the banks. There are a mix of mature shade trees and pines along Peapack Road at the Far Hills Farm with additional mature trees near the historic gatehouse at the Natirar entrance drive. The steep sloped wooded ridges up to the Natirar main house are a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees that add variety

and also screen views of the Natirar main house. There is also the remnant of an orchard with a pine hedgerow along the northern driveway. The diverse vegetation on the estate provides opportunities for environmental education and a cultural landscape profile providing further augmentation of the cultural setting and milieu.

Water Features



Natirar is at the confluence of the North Branch of the Raritan River and Peapack Brook and has related wetlands and floodplains associated with these river systems. Both watercourses have special environmental limitations including flood plains, wetlands, and Category One (C-1) waters, which require special protection. The North Branch is a key visual element of the landscape providing a winding linear spine on the portion of the tract located on the east side of Peapack Road. Existing stone and partially paved drives parallel the North Branch from Peapack Road providing views and access to the river.



Peapack Brook parallels the boundary of the Far Hills Farm section of Natirar. The brook is enclosed by woods and is located within a floodplain. As C-1 waters, a 300 foot buffer is required. This area along the Peapack Brook is currently less accessible since there is no existing trail network; however, it is part of a planned greenway system in Peapack/Gladstone.



There are also minor streams and drainage ways on the tract including that near the Grey Barn complex draining into the pond and then piped underground to the North Branch of the Raritan River. The pond near the Grey Barn Complex is also an attractive water feature, which should be considered as a future design opportunity for Natirar. The pond is piped underground at its outlet with the pond; the exact

location of the pipe nor its outlet to the North Branch is not shown on the property survey and it appears to be open stream in an early survey of the Ladd estate purchase.

Bridges



Bridges are an important feature at Natirar providing both historic elements from Natirar estate development plan as well as practical crossings over the North Branch. There are three concrete bridges crossing the North Branch, which were constructed as part of the Natirar Estate. A fourth bridge crosses the tributary to the North Branch near the incinerator building. There is also an attractive stone arch bridge off site, which links Lake Road in Far Hills, the river trail and unimproved Highland Avenue.



The historic Passaic & Delaware Extension Railroad/ North Branch of the Raritan River Bridge is also a key visual feature of Natirar. This bridge was recently rebuilt in a design reflecting the historic bridge structure. This bridge



is part of the Gladstone Branch of the Morris and Essex railroad line, which traverses Natirar with the railroad crossing under Peapack Road.

There is a 1910 railroad underpass, which is in a flood prone area and is wet much of the year.

Views



The views both from the adjacent roads and within Natirar itself are an important consideration in the design of the park. Peapack Road is identified as a scenic road in the *1992 Somerset County Scenic Corridor and Roadway Study*. The openness of most of the frontage along the east side of Peapack Road, with the exception of the wooded area around the railroad underpass and trestle, accommodates attractive long views across the rolling fields toward the wooded slopes and ridge. The Natirar main house can be partially glimpsed from points along Peapack Road.



The views into Natirar are also partially blocked from the road by areas with steeper banked road berms and an attractive stonewall near the Peapack Roadhouse (Building #10) along Peapack Road, which adds visual interest. Elm Cottage on the Far Hills Farm is framed and screened by the mature vegetation along Peapack Road. The historic railroad trestle is also glimpsed from Peapack Road through the trees along the North Branch.



The winding driveway screened with mature trees provides open views under the canopy as one travels along the main entrance drive. The view of the Natirar main house from the lower field is particularly prominent through what appears to be a designed break in the vegetation. The lease agreement with Virgin Spa protects this important viewshed over the lower fields towards the Far Hills ridgeline. The viewshed along Peapack Road on the main tract will also be protected through an easement agreement with the Village of Peapack and Gladstone.



The river trail along the North Branch provides a different environment with views across the woods on the steep banks along the North Branch east to glimpses of the Far Hills estate homes on the other side. The steep wooded slopes along the western side of this trail have attractive areas with rock outcrops and form a protected view corridor.

Over Bridge #1 into Far Hills, the view is enclosed through the woodlands opening up to the open fields in Far Hills with long views towards the north and the upper wooded ridgelines on Natirar and beyond. There is also an attractive view from the upper field plateau at the Hay Barn towards the North Branch and Peapack Road.

Natural Resources

An inventory was made of the significant environmental features on the Natirar site including water bodies, landscape habitat including plant and animal species, wetlands, flood prone areas, soils, geology and other features that may affect future development on the site as a County Park. This assessment also identified opportunities based on the unique environmental and regulatory constraints of the property that may be integrated into the park planning. This work summarized available documents including New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) data, the Natirar Report prepared by the Somerset Park Commission and other available reports.

Water Resources

Trout Associated Waters

There are prime fishing recreational opportunities in both the Peapack Brook, which is classified as trout production (FW2-TP(C1)², and the North Branch, which is trout maintenance in the Natirar segment (FW2-TM1³) from the Ravine Lake dam to Route 512 Bridge. From the confluence with Peapack Brook to confluence with Raritan River the river is classified as impaired due to high fecal coliform. ⁴

Floodplains/Flood-prone Areas ⁵

USGS Flood prone areas are mapped in association with the North Branch of the Raritan River and Peapack Brook and a FEMA 100-year floodplain is present. ^{6 7 8} There is a warning issued in the current FEMA mapping pertaining to development in the North Branch flood hazard zone in the lower fields (Cow Meadow area). The North Branch is currently being studied and the flooding information updated since the original study was based upon 1970's data. Because the floodplain is associated with FW-1 and FW-2 waters, a minimum fifty feet setback from the top of the channel bank is required. Any development must be in accordance with the New Jersey Flood Hazard Act.

A wide range of private and public recreation activities are exempt from these regulations including:

- playing fields or courts including backstops and/or open bleachers
- bicycle paths
- picnic grounds
- swimming areas, park
- wildlife and nature preserves
- game farms
- hunting and fishing areas
- boat launching ramps constructed at grade
- shooting preserves
- hiking and horseback riding trails
- driving ranges, archery ranges, target, ranges, trap and skeet ranges
- fish hatcheries
- anchored auxiliary utility buildings up to 100 square feet as well as fences and in-ground and above-ground pools provided that they do not displace more than 100 cubic yards of flood plain storage
- Roadway repairs and maintenance that will not raise the existing road grade.

² State of New Jersey. 2004. *Surface Water Quality Standards (N.J.A.C. 7:9B)*, August 2, 2004

³ 2003. NJDEP Division of Watershed Management. *Amendment to Lower Raritan/Middlesex Water Quality Management Plan... Total Maximum Daily Loads for Fecal Coliform to address 48 Streams in the Raritan Water Region*. Trenton, NJ

^{4 4} NJDEP. 2004. *Landscape Project, version 2.0*. Trenton, NJ

⁵ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). 1977. *Peapack-Gladstone Flood Insurance Rate Map, Community Panel No. 340441-0002B*

⁶ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). 1978. *Far Hills Flood Insurance Rate Map, Community Panel No. 340433-0001A*

⁷ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). 1984. *Bedminster Flood Insurance Rate Map, Community Panel No. 340427-0006B*

Freshwater Wetlands

Significant areas along the river terrace are within identified wetlands areas according to the NJDEP National Wetlands Inventory mapping. Any fill or disturbance of onsite wetlands is regulated by the State under the Wetlands Protection Act Rules. For example, activities requiring fill or disturbance of the onsite, emergent and isolated wetlands under General Permit 6 may not result in the loss or substantial modification of more than one acre of freshwater wetland, transition area, and/or State open waters.

Trails and Boardwalks in wetlands or wetlands transition areas can be approved under General Permit No. 17. There are *no constraints* on area of disturbance for trails and boardwalks on public lands; however the trail or boardwalk can be no wider than six feet, unless it is needed to comply with the barrier free subcode requirements.⁹ However, General Permit 17 does not authorize construction of a restroom, gazebo, rain shelter, or any covered or enclosed structure or construction of a roadway for use by automobiles, golf carts, motorcycles, motorized trail bikes, all-terrain vehicles, or other motor vehicles.

Because of its Trout Production and Category One (C-1) status, wetlands buffers of 150 feet are likely to be imposed on wetlands associated with Peapack Brook. Because of mapping of habitat for Red-shouldered hawk and Barred owl, the imposition of a 150-foot buffer on wetlands associated with the North Branch is possible. Activities within the wetlands buffers finally established by NJDEP are subject to regulation. Transition area waiver-and averaging plans can be developed for some activities. There are many non-regulated activities in wetlands transition areas that will apply to Natirar including, but not limited to normal property maintenance, selective tree cutting and pruning, planting of native species and supplement vegetation etc. Especially relevant to Natirar, the regulations permit the repair, rehabilitation, replacement, maintenance or reconstruction of structures constructed prior to July 1, 1989.

There are certain General Permits which encourage certain improvements to wetlands that will help to educate park users about the importance of freshwater wetlands, transition areas and State open waters; for example, through signs identifying plants and animals or explaining hydrology, ecology, or other significant environmental features or phenomena (General Permit No 17).

General Permit No.16 authorizes habitat creation and enhancement activities in freshwater wetlands. Use of these General Permits can provide an opportunity to use Natirar as an education laboratory for its visitors. One opportunity discussed was the removal of the pipe and opening up of the stream, which leads from the pond near the Grey Barns to the North Branch (This would fall under General Permit No 16). (See Wetlands and Floodprone Areas Map).

Storm Water Management

Natirar development will be regulated under New Jersey Storm Water Management Act rules. These include projects that disturb one acre of land or the placement of ¼ acre of impervious cover. Exempt from groundwater recharge, stormwater runoff quality and quantity provisions are linear developments underground or above-ground utility, with conditions and public pedestrian access, such as a sidewalk or trail, up to 14 feet wide and made of permeable materials.

Special Resource Protection Areas are applied to C-1 waters applicable to the Gladstone portion of Peapack Brook and include the provision of a 300-foot stream buffer and no stormwater discharge is permitted; however, development in previously developed areas, up to 150 feet from the watercourse within lawns, parking areas or areas under active agricultural use is acceptable.



The use of bioswales and constructed wetlands to treat stormwater runoff and improve water quality is one opportunity to use the goals of a Stormwater Management Plan to demonstrate progressive land use management. Although wetlands restored or created for the use of habitat are usually not also designed for the conveyance and treatment of stormwater, the conveyance and treatment of stormwater runoff can be done above ground in basins using native plants to assimilate nutrient pollution. The combination of water treatment, landscape aesthetics and educational opportunities

⁹ Barrier free Subcode of the Standard Uniform Construction Code, N.J.A.C. 5:23-7.

may provide an approach to use the site as an amenity that restores the land, improves the quality of runoff, and provides public access, interpretation, and education.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Landscape Map provides data of threatened and endangered species habitat in the Natirar area. Ranking goes from Rank 1 to Rank 5 with Rank 1 being the least sensitive. The forested areas north and east of Peapack Road are the most sensitive and included State threatened Barred Owl sightings and numerous priority bird species. This sensitivity emphasizes the need to limit disturbance to maintain this habitat. (See Endangered Species and Critical Habitats Map)

- Rested Wetlands along portions of North Branch of the Raritan River
 - Rank 1 – no specific species associated
- Emergent Wetlands in possible Special Events Area
 - Rank 1 – no specific species associated
- Grassland Habitat in most open field areas
 - Rank 1 – no specific species associated
- Forest Habitat includes all wooded areas north and east of Peapack Road
 - Red-Shouldered Hawk (State breeding population is endangered, wintering population is threatened)
 - Barred Owl (State threatened species)
 - Bird priority species: Baltimore oriole, Black-and-white Warbler, Brown thrasher, Eastern wood-pewee, Gray catbird, Great blue heron, Hairy woodpecker, Louisiana waterthrush, Prairie warbler, Red-eyed vireo, Rose-breasted grosbeak, Scarlet tanager, Veery, Willow flycatcher, Wood thrush.

Soils

The Natirar property is characterized by a number of soil types with varying limitations for basements, septic tanks, roads, landfills, etc. The soils are grouped below by category of limitation as presented by the U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service¹⁰. Limitations for both building foundations and septic systems are shown on the following table and maps. As evidenced on the Soils Map, most of Natirar exhibits severe limitations for septic systems due to shallow depth to bedrock or seasonal high water table. (See Soils Maps)

¹⁰ Kirkham, 1989, Soil Survey Somerset County

SOILS TABLE

Key	Soil Type	Construction Constraints	Notes	Septic System Constraints	Notes
AbB	Abbotstown	4	Seasonal high water table	4	Seasonal high water table
ArB	Arendtsville	1	Frost action potential	1	Ground water pollution
BdB, BdC	Birdsboro	1	Frost action potential and slopes	1	Ground water pollution and slopes
Bt	Bowmansville	4	Stream overflow hazard	4	Stream overflow hazard
CcB	Calfon	4	Seasonal high water table	4	Slow permeability and seasonal high water table;
EdB, EdC, EdD	Edneyville	1	Frost action potential and slopes	3	Shallow depth to bedrock and slopes
KID, KIE,	Klinesville	4	Shallow depth to bedrock	4	Shallow depth to bedrock
LbB	Lansdowne	4	Seasonal high water table	4	Seasonal high water table
MeC	Meckesville	3	Seasonal high water table and slopes	4	High water table and slope
NeC, NhE, NKD	Neshaminy	3	Shallow bedrock, slopes, seasonal high water table	3	Depth to bedrock and slope
NoB, NoC2	Norton	1	Frost action potential and slopes	4	Slow permeability
PbC, PcE, PeD	Parker	4	Steep slopes	4	Steep slopes
PID	Pattenburg	2	Slopes and depth to bedrock	4	Steep slope and rapid permeability that creates groundwater pollution hazard
PmC, PnB, PnC	Penn	2	Shallow bedrock, frost action potential and slopes	4	Bedrock
RbA	Raritan	4	Seasonal high water table, frost action potential and stream overflow hazard	4	High water table and stream overflow hazard
ReA	Reaville	4	High water table and frost action potential	4	High water table and depth to bedrock
Ro	Rowland	4	Stream overflow hazard	4	Stream overflow hazard
UD	Udfluvents and Ochrepts	4	Stream overflow hazard	4	Stream overflow hazard

<u>Key</u>	
Slight to moderate	1
Moderate	2
Moderate to severe	3
Severe	4

Geology



The property is located in northern Somerset County at the transition between two physiographic provinces: the southern limit of the Highlands, characterized by older Proterozoic and Cambrian metamorphic rocks; and the northern limit of the Piedmont, characterized by Mesozoic (Triassic/Jurassic) sedimentary rocks. On site, the boundary between the two provinces and rock types is formed by a branching fault, which separates the more resistant, hill-forming metamorphic material to the north from the less resistant, low-elevation sedimentary material to the south. The location of the property at the boundary between the Highland Physiographic Province to the north and the Piedmont Physiographic Province to the south provides a unique and exciting opportunity for nature trails, interpretive signs, and field trip experiences. The Edneyville (EdB, EdC, EdD) and Klinesville (KID, KIE) soils are

described as potentially containing bedrock outcrops. The southern limit of the Highlands is characterized by older, highly deformed Proterozoic and Cambrian metamorphic rocks (gneisses, schists, etc.); and the northern limit of the Piedmont is characterized by Mesozoic (Triassic/Jurassic) sedimentary rocks. This boundary is evident in the field. Land forms, vegetation, location of streams and rivers, and formation of wetlands all can be explained in the context of the original history of the landscape¹¹.

Natural Resources Opportunities

Interpretive Signage Program

The placement of nature trails and interpretive signs and the use of field trips, perhaps led through a docent program, would provide an important opportunity to include the public in passive recreational activities and also provide an educational component regarding the importance of and management of the site's natural resources. A "nature park" focus of the site with its trail and interpretive program could result in a regionally significant public amenity.

Ecological Restoration Efforts

A number of opportunities exist on Natirar for a variety of ecological restoration efforts. One ecological restoration goal could be to enhance the existing degraded wetlands or create higher functioning examples of Palustrine emergent wetlands that would contribute to the overall importance of the landscape, improve the aesthetic values and provide opportunities for community involvement in the restoration processes. In association with this effort, the adjacent grassland habitats, likely to be dominated by exotic species, could also be restored to habitat dominated by native species. The transition between the emergent wetland and upland grassland also is an interesting habitat often supporting edge-dependent species.

Use of local reference habitats to serve as sites for developing design protocols, comparison monitoring, and source of plant materials (seeds, cuttings) would provide an opportunity to enhance, restore and/or create a landscape that replicates local plant and animal communities, uses local genotypes of plant material, and increases the likelihood of ecological success.

The pond at the Grey Barns Complex is another opportunity to examine restoration of the stream tributary to its natural conditions. Additionally the lower Far Hills tract between the railroad right-of-way and the North Branch is another opportunity to provide a living classroom with access to this area. It could be a pilot project to assess conditions and appropriately plan this wetlands area for public access. These restoration opportunities also provide important opportunities for public access, interpretation, education, and involvement. The nature trail and interpretive sign system could focus on the restoration projects and related site management goals.

¹¹ Somerset County Park Commission, The Natirar association, The RBA Group, Upper Raritan Watershed Association. 2002. *Natirar: A Study of the Estate of the King of Morocco, Borough of Peapack/Gladstone, Borough of Far Hills, Township of Bedminster, Somerset County, New Jersey.*

Cultural Resources

Introduction: Methods and Sources

The Natirar property was visited and examined in October 2004 by CRCG's senior architectural historian. An additional visit took place that fall in which the senior architectural historian met with members of the Natirar Association regarding archival plans for the property and Natirar's history. Blueprints and a group of survey drawings relating to Walter G. and Kate Macy Ladd's occupation and development of the property beginning in 1905 were examined and the history of the site and the surrounding region was discussed. In January 2005, this survey was photographed by a research assistant.

Cultural resource investigations previously completed for the property and those adjacent were also sought in the files of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection - Historic Preservation Office and the New Jersey State Museum and examined. Background research included examination of historic maps and investigation of primary and secondary documentary sources. Among the primary sources not documented in previous studies was a group of 1905 drawings by Gordon H. Taylor that surveyed a significant portion of the present Natirar property.

Prior Studies and Previously Identified Resources

Several prior cultural resource studies have been completed either on the present Natirar property or adjacent to it. The two reports that have addressed the Natirar property itself were completed by RBA. The first of these, a Phase I/II investigation, was conducted in 1997 in connection with the replacement of bridges over the North Branch of the Raritan (RBA Group 1997). This report identified the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District, which received an Opinion of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places from the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office in 1997. This district, which is significant under all of the National Register criteria, includes 7 buildings that are part of the Natirar property, as well as a number of historic-period archaeological sites. These resources include the Allen/Arrosmith/Schomp House (Elm Cottage – mid-18th century with extensive mid-19th-century additions and alterations), the Peapack Brook Mill (Grist Mill – mid-19th century), the Schomp Tenant House I (Ash Cottage), the Schomp Tenant House II (Oak Cottage – late 19th century), the Schomp Barn (19th century), the Schomp Corn Crib (19th century), the Arrosmith/Schomp Tenant House (Gate House – earliest portions mid-18th century) the so-called Hunt's Folly Channel and Tunnel, the remains of the former headrace and dam associated with the Melick Bark Mill site and the Peapack Brook Mill, and others. These resources are well documented in this report (see Table of Known Historic and Cultural Resources Outside the Virgin Lease Area). The location of buildings on the site is documented on the Study Area Map.

In 2002, RBA also participated in a study of Natirar prepared by the Somerset County Park Commission. The historic resources inventoried (RBA Group 2002:22-26) included those identified in the earlier report, described under the rubric of "Peapack Brook Farmstead, Mill and Store Property (Far Hills Farm)". In addition to this, the report identifies two historic resources associated with the railroad line that crosses the property. The first of these is the Passaic & Delaware Extension Railroad/North Branch of the Raritan River Bridge of 1890, which received an SHPO Opinion of Eligibility in 1997. The second is the Passaic & Delaware Extension Railroad itself. The buildings associated with the Ladds' occupation of the site and its development as Natirar were also inventoried, including the main dwelling and the secondary services buildings near it. These are located within the Virgin Spa lease area and are thus not addressed in this discussion. The report also identified the Nevius/Rodman Farmstead, or the "Grey Barns" group, and dates its buildings to the 19th century. Finally, several farmstead and house sites were identified based on the evidence of historic maps. Two sites to the north of the Arrosmith/Schomp Tenant House (Gate House) on Peapack Road were included – the Fleming/Tiger House Sites I and II (before mid-19th century). Another site, the Lane/Sutphen Farmstead Site (before mid-19th century), was identified on the eastern end of the property, near the edge of the wooded area in the lowland west of the North Branch of the Raritan.

No deposits of prehistoric archaeological remains have been previously identified on the current Natirar property. The issue of prehistoric archaeological sensitivity is only addressed in the 1997 RBA study in connection with the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District. As that report noted, there are no known prehistoric archaeological sites within this district (RBA Group 1997:Page 11). As the report also noted, however, that Andrew Mellick, a descendant of an owner of an early homestead in the District, recorded that the "Old Farm has produced a generous crop of stone implements

and arrowheads planted by the aborigines in ante-European days" (Mellick 1948:Page 43-44). Despite this, and the fact that the project area for this earlier study included the confluence of the Peapack Brook and the North Branch, an area that would normally be sensitive for prehistoric remains, subsurface testing yielded no evidence of occupation. It should be noted (as it is in this report) that testing was only conducted in the floodplain, where artifacts if present at one time may have washed away, and not in the adjacent uplands or any other portion of the district, where preservation of any potential remains is more likely.

Previous Evaluations of Historic Significance

As noted, the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District received an Opinion of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places from the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office on May 2, 1997. The Opinion noted that the district was significant under Criteria A, B, C, and D "as illustrating the agricultural and industrial development of the region in the 18th and 19th centuries, with a period of significance of 1750 to 1900."

This same opinion noted that Natirar was potentially eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B and C but did not detail the areas of significance or associations. Natirar received a Certification of Eligibility from Dorothy Guzzo, the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer of the NJHPO, on October 25, 2002, which noted that the property was significant under Criterion C for both architecture and landscape architecture, although the basis of these areas of significance was not articulated. Guzzo also noted that Natirar may be eligible under Criterion A "in the area of health, for the convalescent home for single women, which was founded by the Ladds in 1908 and that the mansion housed from 1933 until 1983."

Finally, the North Branch of the Raritan River Railroad Bridge was one of a group of bridges that was received an Opinion of Eligibility from the NJHPO on February 3, 1999. In this Opinion, the bridge was characterized as being individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Previously Unidentified Resources

Historic Architectural Resources

No historic buildings were discovered during the course of this study that had not already been identified earlier. Many of the Natirar historic architectural resources, which include the Natirar main house and a relatively large group of secondary estate buildings, are located within the Virgin Group lease area and are therefore not included in this discussion. It should also be noted that there are a number of barn and storage buildings on the Natirar property that are not historic, and which are associated with King of Morocco's ownership and the Angus beef cattle herd currently on the property. These are the Hay Barn and the Morton Buildings.

The architectural resources outside of the Virgin Group lease area largely pre-date the Ladds' ownership of the estate, and reflect the progression of land uses in Somerset County from the earliest period of occupation by European immigrants and their descendants. These resources survive in two distinct areas: the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District, and the Grey Barns area. They are addressed in detail in the buildings inventory section of this report.

The buildings and structures that survive from the periods before the Ladd's ownership of the property are associated with important aspects of the history of Somerset Hills and the Peapack/Gladstone area. Specifically, the agricultural traditions of the region are represented in the both the Grey Barns buildings and in the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District. The milling activities made possible by such watercourses as the North Branch of the Raritan and Peapack Brook are also represented here. The key role that the railroad had in developing the area generally, but more specifically as a region of grand estates, is represented in the presence of the Passaic & Delaware Extension Railroad/North Branch of the Raritan River Bridge and the Passaic & Delaware Extension Railroad.

While the buildings within the Virgin Group lease area are excluded from this study, background research indicates that period documentation on the creation of the Ladds' estate is noticeably lacking from the published record. In contrast to many such commissions, for example, Guy Lowell's (1870-1927, the main designer for the house and the secondary buildings associated with it) original work was apparently not recorded in contemporary professional journals or similar outlets, and the principal documents for his project are the surviving blueprints at Natirar, which also document the involvement of New York architect Henry J. Hardenbergh (1847-1918). In the same vein, there is no known single repository for the Ladds' archives.

Historic Landscape Resources

The Certification of Eligibility that Natirar received in 2002 noted the property's historic significance under National Register Criterion C. Under Criterion C, properties are significant "that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction." Because the letter discusses the involvement of architect and landscape designer Guy Lowell, it could be inferred that Natirar's significance under Criterion C relates to his work as a "master," although this is not explicit.

The bulk of previously unidentified historic resources associated with the Natirar property can be broadly classified as cultural landscape resources, and, as noted, this is one of the bases on which the property's significance is discussed in the Certification of Eligibility. In fact, given the layers of known historic occupation on the property (leaving aside potential evidence about pre-historic occupation), the whole property can be understood as a historic landscape. Like many other American estates, the grounds can be characterized as a park-like place generally based on the model of the English picturesque landscape garden. However, because of the intentionally naturalistic qualities of such sites, their historic features are often difficult to identify. This is compounded by a relative lack of evidence uncovered to date about the details of the development of the landscape under the Ladds' ownership and before. There are no known account books or design drawings that document the Ladds' work or that of the designers they employed in the landscape, which included New York architect Henry Hardenburgh.

One reason for the lack of published period documents regarding Natirar may be the physical and mental disabilities of Kate Macy Ladd. She has been described as an invalid (for example, in RBA Group 2002:5) and spent much of her adult life in a wheelchair. In her own autobiographical account, which is dominated by a history of her own illnesses and the illnesses and deaths of others, she characterizes her own "abnormally sensitive nature" (Ladd 1930:4), and recounts many incidents that make it clear that her problems from an early age went beyond physical difficulties alone. For example, she relates many instances of her confinement to sanitarium and being given various cures, including the famous rest cure prescribed for women she received from Philadelphia physician S. Weir Mitchell (Ladd 1930:35; she also tells of visits he paid to her after his death). This discussion of Mrs. Ladd is included here to document the rather unusual relationship she and her husband are likely to have had with the Natirar property compared with the more active, recreational uses made of nearby estates by their neighbors and peers.

There is little known direct evidence about historic plantings at Natirar beyond what is on the site today. While there are no known surviving design drawings or planting records for the Natirar landscape per se, examination of the site and of the 1905 survey conducted for the Ladds reveals several key development facts. This survey covers neither the entire property owned by the Ladds nor the entire present Natirar property. Instead, it shows the portion of the estate that is now in the Virgin Group lease area, the Grey Barns area, the portion of the property to the east to the North Branch, and the meadow area to the south of this. In addition, the southern entrance road to the property from the Far Hills train depot is also included – the Ladds owned property to Far Hills at this point. The roadway that leads from Bridge #1 south to the edge of the property is the remaining portion of this important axis.

The 1905 survey drawings indicate that the estate was relatively open and unwooded except in the areas of the property with the steepest slopes. Annotations such as "hay field" and "this area plowed" indicate agricultural uses. This indicates that much of the wooded growth on the site post-dates the Ladds' purchases. To what extent the wooded growth on the site represents a design by Lowell and/or Hardenburgh is unknown, but it seems likely that what survives on site is in some respect reflective of their work. Certainly, given the age of the trees and such introduced shrubs as rhododendrons along the North Branch banks; it can be assumed that many of these were planted in the historic period. Further, the fundamentally picturesque character of the pattern of wooded areas and open space, which frame views to and from the house and throughout the estate, particularly in the areas to the south and southwest of the main house and from the roadways, is undeniably a historic aspect of the estate landscape and should be treated as such.



Roadways

The 1905 Survey clearly indicates that the circulation patterns within the property have changed since the Ladds acquired the lots that became Natirar. The most significant changes have been the creation of the entrance main drive that leads from the triangular intersection to the south of the Grey Barns, proceeds to the north, and traverses the slope of the hill to the main house. The main entrance drive to the estate house that stood on the hill to the west of the present Natirar main house was the road that survives along the North Branch. Clearly, most if not all of the existing roadways within the estate should be considered part of Natirar's historic fabric and the main drive in front of the house is likely to be part of the design campaign for the main house.

Bridges, Walls and Other Structures



Many structures in the landscape can be considered important historic resources. These include the three bridges across the North Branch within the property, stonework along the North Branch and adjacent slopes, and the entrance gateposts on Peapack Road. Their character contributes subtly yet substantially to the historic whole of the Natirar estate.

Environment

The environmental elements on Natirar were reviewed in the previous sections of this inventory. Regarding soils, overall the soil types of the subject property are fertile and promote fair to good woodland and agricultural resources. The preservation of organic archaeological materials such as bone and shell, however, will not be favored anywhere within the subject property due to high soil acidity. The soils, topography and continental climate (humid and temperate) form several habitats very favorable to humans within the subject property. In particular, well-drained soil, together with the floral and faunal resources present in the subject property, and the county's yearly climate, would have been attractive to humans. The presence of springs and small feeder tributaries in addition to the higher-order watercourses of Peapack Brook and the North Branch of the Raritan River would have provided additional attractive elements, such as drinking water, fish, wetlands plant resources, and a variety of game attracted to the streamside habitat.

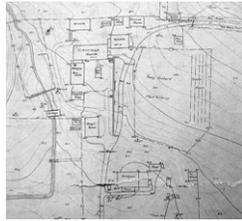
The environmental elements described above are generally associated with human habitation in this portion of New Jersey beginning with the Late Archaic (HPO Historic Context 3), some 6,000 to 3,000 years ago, and continuing into the present. (Modern climatic and environmental conditions began to appear between 8,500 and 5,000 years ago, and were established by 3,000 years ago [e.g., Custer 1984, 1996]). The steep slopes and rocky soils of a large part of the subject property reduce the likelihood of prehistoric occupation at these locations (the presence of rock shelters notwithstanding). However, the proximity of high-order watercourses on three sides of the property argues for moderate to high prehistoric archaeological sensitivity. Consequently, it is concluded that portions of the subject property have a moderate to high probability to contain previously unidentified archaeological sites from the Late Archaic, and subsequent Woodland and historic periods.

Potential for Previously Unidentified Archaeological Sites

Prehistoric Resources

No previously recorded prehistoric archaeological sites are located within the Natirar property. In general, the Natirar property exhibits topographic settings (e.g., well-drained soils and elevated ground close to water) that are conducive to aboriginal occupation. However, the steep slopes and rocky soils of the subject property reduce the likelihood of prehistoric occupation (again, with the exception of the possible occurrence of rock shelters). The relatively close distance that portions of the subject property lie from higher-order watercourses argues for increased prehistoric archaeological sensitivity. Consequently, it can be deduced that portions of the subject property have a moderate to high probability to contain previously unidentified prehistoric archaeological sites.

Historic-Period Resources



As the majority of the acreage of the present Natirar property is likely to have been used largely as agricultural fields and pasture throughout the historic period, there is a low probability that archaeological sites associated with historic-period agricultural use will be found in most areas of the Natirar land, particularly on the east side of Peapack Road. Several items should be noted in connection with historic-period sites, however. First, although it is within the Virgin Group lease area, the most substantial previously unidentified historic period archaeological



site is that of the former estate house that stood near the present Natirar main house and to the west, which is clearly evident in the 1905 survey. This house is unidentified in the RBA Group 2002 report, although its existence is noted in correspondence on file at the NJHPO as the former Zachariah Belcher property. This is the house described by Mrs. Ladd as the “old Belcher place” and as the Ladds’ residence on the property during the eight-year period of construction of the current main house (Ladd 1930:69).

It should also be noted that the Lane/Sutphen Farmstead Site is mislocated in the 2002 report, which places it too far to the east. The 1905 survey clearly indicates its location almost due south of the main house, at the edge of a small ridge. At the time of the Ladds’ purchase of the property, it was the estate superintendent’s house, as it is labeled on the 1905 survey drawing.

In the same vein, while the demolition of the main house of the Nevius/Rodman Farmstead is noted in the 2002 report (Somerset County Parks Commission et al. 2002:23), its site is not specifically located. It was, at the time of the Ladds’ purchase, the gardener’s house. With the construction of the group of secondary buildings at the top of the hill near the main house, the gardener would have been housed elsewhere. It should be noted that archaeological evidence of other historic uses may be found in the areas around the surviving buildings.



The Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District is most likely to be the general area of previously unlocated evidence of historic uses. The potential for historic features and deposits has been identified previously (RBA Group 1997:37), but bears repeating. Possible sites are likely to include, but are not necessarily limited to, the remains of former secondary buildings and gardens, particularly around surviving houses, and deposits relating to agricultural activities. For example, the terracing around the Allen/Arrosmith/Schomp House (Elm Cottage) may indicate the site of former garden or orchard areas.

Opportunities – Cultural Resources

Public Education – Cultural Resources

The greatest opportunities presented by Natirar’s cultural resources are those for public education and quality of experience. An advantage that Natirar presents as a historic estate landscape is that it provides the opportunity not only for outdoor recreation connected with the use of natural resources, but it also provides the rare chance for the public to participate in the experience of a Somerset County estate. While the buildings within the lease area may

seem to some the only places at Natirar that would provide this, this is certainly not the case. The many historic resources throughout the grounds, including buildings, structures, plantings and open space, roadways, and archaeological sites, provide wonderful opportunities for enhancement of visitor experience. Preservation of historic structures and replacement when and if necessary with historically compatible design continues the experience of the Ladds' estate into the property outside of the lease area. For example, if replacement of bridges is required for public safety reasons, a new structure with some of the key design features of the current bridge would be most effective. Interpretative signage or other tools could be used to provide essential information and enhance visitor experience. Maintenance that preserves historically picturesque viewsheds and the essential combination of field and wooded areas would continue to provide this quality of visitor experience.

Interpretation of Rural Industrial and Agrarian Past

The Far Hills Farm and Grey Barns areas also provide the analogous opportunity for the experience of the area's rural industrial and agrarian past. Preservation and highlighting of historic fabric in adaptive re-use in facilities that retain historic integrity, of which Elm Cottage and the Grey Barns buildings are excellent examples, both add to the quality of visitor experience and constitute responsible stewardship for the future. Any new construction projects in sensitive areas should involve identification-level archaeological testing and planning should proceed according to the results of this testing. Leaving aside the issues of regulatory compliance, should remains be discovered in any such investigation, their interpretation also provides an opportunity.

Targeted Education/Interpretation

Key to an enhanced visitor experience is targeted education and interpretation. While much is known about Natirar, and a significant amount of research has already been conducted, further research and interpretation would add significantly to the understanding of the site and its experience by the public. Given that it is likely that access to the lease area will be limited relative to other parts of the property, interpretive signage that addresses the main house and is located outside of the lease area would be an asset for visitor experience. Among the research tasks that might be pursued, a complete history of land transactions (chain of title) would undoubtedly be informative, as would a detailed comparative study of Guy Lowell and Henry Hardenbergh's other landscape projects. Additional research recommendations should be developed to guide both adaptive re-use and interpretive projects.

National Register Listing

While National Register listing may present certain constraints, it also represents opportunities, particularly with regard to funding for preservation projects. For example, in order for a project to be eligible to apply for a grant through the New Jersey Historic Trust, the property in question must be listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places. National Register listing also provides a baseline level of recognition of historic significance for other preservation funding opportunities. National Register listing would also enhance the prestige of the site in the public's perception and can thus enhance outreach and marketing options in heritage tourism.

Constraints - Cultural Resources

State and Federal Regulation

The primary potential restraints on future development presented by cultural resource management for Natirar are those triggered by state and federal regulations. Any future project with federal involvement (the use of federal money, federal permitting or licensing, or any other involvement by a federal agency at Natirar) may trigger the Section 106 process. Simply stated, the Section 106 (named for this portion of the National Historic Preservation Act) process requires the federal agency involved to take into account the effect of the project on historic and cultural properties. In this process, detailed in 36 CFR 800 (Code of Federal Regulations Title 36, Part 800), historic and cultural properties must be identified, their historic significance must be evaluated in relationship to the standards of the National Register of Historic Places, and the effect of the project on those resources must be assessed. If there is an adverse effect on the resources identified in earlier phases, then alternatives must be explored to avoid or reduce the harm caused by the project. Adverse effect is not necessarily only physical harm to a resource, but may include changes to its surroundings and views to and from it. While the federal agency may deem it necessary to continue with the project without reducing its adverse effect on historic and cultural properties, in practice there is most often some mitigation

that takes place. Sometimes this is the recording of a building that must be demolished, or the complete recovery of archaeological remains in an area of new construction.

Section 106 Review

There are several parties that are mandated by federal regulation to participate in the Section 106 review process, including the State (or Tribal if appropriate – this does not apply in New Jersey) Historic Preservation Office and the general public, which is invited to comment and can become part of a programmatic agreement regarding mitigation. The federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation can also play a mediating role.

For Natirar, Section 106 review is most likely to occur if there were to be involvement for a construction project in which a federal agency were involved, for example the Army Corps of Engineers. Section 106 review would also take place in an instance were a federal agency were involved in a highway project on, adjacent to, or nearby the property. NJDOT projects also trigger 106 review because of the involvement of the Federal Highway Administration.

The fact that Natirar has received a Certification of Eligibility (for the main property) and an Opinion of Eligibility (for the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District) from the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office would not necessarily affect the outcome of a Section 106 Review. These identification and evaluation documents would, however, be taken into account in any such review.

NJDEP Permit Review

There are several New Jersey state regulations which trigger reviews within the NJDEP that are very similar to the Section 106 process. For example, if a Freshwater Wetlands permit were required for a construction project, it would be necessary to identify historic and cultural resources, evaluate their historic significance, and assess the affect of the project before a permit can be issued. This review would be conducted through the NJHPO. The Coastal Area Facilities Review Act, which is not relevant to Natirar, also functions in this way. Under New Jersey Executive Order 215, projects funded through the Economic Development Agency also trigger review, but the results of the review are not as clearly mandated as they are in Section 106 related regulations and other New Jersey regulations.

New Jersey State Register Act

Because Natirar is owned by a public agency and because there have been previous evaluations of historic significance issued by the NJHPO for different portions of the property, the New Jersey State Register Act could potentially lead to review of any development project by the New Jersey Historic Sites Council to determine if the project qualifies as an encroachment (analogous to adverse effect under Section 106). Technically, only properties that are on the New Jersey State Historic Register (all properties in the state listed on the National Register are automatically included) can be reviewed. Properties that have received Determinations, Opinions, or Certifications of Eligibility from the NJHPO and have not been either officially nominated or listed on the New Jersey or National Registers are neither explicitly excluded from nor included in review by the regulations. Review under the State Register Act is less likely than it would be if Natirar were listed on the New Jersey and National Registers, and does not occur frequently in practice. If the Natirar property, or portions of it, were actually nominated and listed on the National and New Jersey Registers of Historic Places, then this review would certainly occur. Fundamentally, however, as a recognized historic resource, the greatest constraint on Natirar's future developments, but one that is less predictable in detail, comes from the interests of the community. Even if a Section 106 or state regulatory review were not in process, given the recognition of the high quality of Natirar's historic qualities and the cultural value of large estates in the region, the public interest is at stake.

As public stewards of the property, the Somerset County Parks Commission will be faced with public concern over the preservation of the region's historic and cultural resources in any development project, and even in regular maintenance. It behooves the Commission as public stewards to consider the effect of projects on historic and cultural resources. The most effective way to do this would be to proceed in the manner of the federal Section 106 process, following the essential steps of identification (including archaeological testing in all sensitive areas prior to any construction), evaluation of historic significance, assessment of affect of undertakings (which should be extended to maintenance as well as new development) and response to this assessment that attempts to avoid, reduce, or mitigate harm. As in the 106 process, there should be public consultation, and it may be appropriate to involve the NJHPO.

Cultural Resources Recommendations

Archival storage of surviving documents and archaeological artifacts

A plan should be made to house all surviving archival documents, particularly historic plans, surveys and blueprints, safely. If possible, a partnership should be established with an existing archive, such as the Avery Library of Columbia University, where public access would be convenient and storage can be accommodated most effectively. Similarly, any archaeological materials or building artifacts replaced or recovered on the property should be housed in a safe and publicly accessible repository.

Historic Registration

- National Register listing should be considered if funding for not-for-profit entities is desirable due to grant opportunities presented by listing on the National Register. Listing for the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District could be pursued separately from other portions of the property east of Peapack Road, if desired.

Documentation, Interpretation, and Intervention

- Documentation: while much is known about the history of Natirar, much more can and should be investigated to guide future development and interpretation. Future documentation projects should include:
 - Complete deed history of all portions of the current Natirar property
 - Further research into earlier landowners before the Ladds, including census information
 - Further research into the Ladds – complete chronology of their lives and documented chronology of their occupation at Natirar
 - Comparative study of the landscape work of Guy Lowell and Henry Hardenbergh to place Natirar within appropriate historic context and better to understand design work that was implemented there
 - Complete tree inventory to estimate age, prioritize and target maintenance and restoration tasks, and provide information about historic landscape fabric
 - Other investigations/comparative studies as needed
- Interpretation and Intervention: the results of the studies noted, together with information gathered in previous studies can be used for targeted interpretation projects. At the simplest level, this could be all-weather signage at strategic points in the property, or more extensive exhibitions in one of the buildings outside of the lease area. Among the topics that could be considered to enhance visitor experience are:
 - Natirar and the estates of the Somerset Hills
 - The farming and milling traditions and practices of Somerset County

Archaeological testing

- Because of the pre-historic and historic sensitivity of much of the property, a general policy of archaeological testing, evaluation, and recovery should be developed for new construction or any other projects that will entail sub-surface disturbance.

Targeted restoration and adaptive re-use

- In the event of any adaptive use, necessary replacement, or other changes to historic fabric, both in buildings and in the landscape, a tiered approach should be adopted:
 - Restoration. Whenever possible, historic fabric should be retained and restored.
 - Compatible new construction. Any new developments should take into account historic styles, materials, forms, and scale to historic materials.

Known Historic and Cultural Resources Outside the Virgin Lease Area Table

RESOURCE TYPE	NAME(S)	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	ASSOCIATED RESOURCE
Building	Allen/Arrosmith/Schomp House Elm Cottage	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Building	Peapack Brook Mill: Grist Mill	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Building	Schomp Tenant House I: Ash Cottage	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Building	Schomp Tenant House II: Oak Cottage	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Building	Schomp Barn	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Building	Schomp Corncrib	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Building	Arrosmith/Schomp Tenant House: Gate House	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Site	Melick Bark Mill	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Site	Melick Bark Mill Head Race and dam	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Site	Saw Mill	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Site	Hunt's Folly	RBA Group 1997	Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District
Structure	Passaic & Delaware Extension Railroad/North Branch of the Raritan River Bridge	Somerset County Commission et al., 2002	N/A
Structures/site	Passaic & Delaware Extension Railroad	Somerset County Commission et al., 2002	N/A
Buildings/site	Grey Barns / Gardener's House/ Nevius/Rodman Farmstead	Somerset County Commission et al., 2002 / 1905 Survey	Natirar estate
Sites	Fleming/Tiger House Sites I&II	Somerset County Commission et al., 2002	Natirar estate
Site	Lane/Sutphen Farmstead Site	Somerset County Commission et al., 2002 / 1905 Survey	Natirar estate

Building Survey

Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects, LLC were retained to provide an inventory of the existing buildings at Natirar (excluding the Virgin Spa lease area). The goals of this inventory are:

- To document the present state of the buildings' architectural materials and overall structural stability; and
- To provide a detailed architectural description of the buildings as found, to become part of the archival record

The methodologies utilized for the process of compiling this inventory were:

On-site physical investigation

Field surveys were conducted to obtain an understanding of each building and its physical condition, including the structural elements and support systems.

Surveys were performed over several days (October 22, October 27, and November 5, 2004) and were limited to visual inspection of each building's perimeter and interior spaces.

Graphic documentation

Measurements were taken and the existing building plans were drawn in AutoCAD for purposes of graphic representation. Photographs were taken to illustrate observed conditions, and photograph locations are keyed to the elevation drawings in the narrative.

Probes were not performed as part of this initial survey. Based on physical observations, assumptions have been made in some cases as to the possible condition of the substrate. Where a more thorough examination of the material and substrate is deemed necessary, further invasive testing may be recommended.

Overall, the buildings are in good to fair condition because they have been in continuous use as estate buildings. A limited number of buildings, most notably the Grist Mill, are in poor condition due to failure of roofing and drainage systems.

The Building Survey is included in the Appendix. This includes photographs of each building, floor plan layouts, a description and condition of key building elements (foundation, exterior wall fabric, fenestration, roofs/chimneys, gutters and downspouts), additional description of exterior conditions and interior conditions, site information including siting, utilities, current use and original use, the overall physical condition and major rehabilitation work required.

Transportation

Road Inventory

An inventory was conducted of transportation facilities serving Natirar. Peapack Road (Main Street/County Route 512) is the main access to Natirar. Other roads near or adjacent to Natirar include Highland Avenue, Lake Avenue and Sunnybranch Road. There are certain constraints to use of these roads for primary park access that should be considered. (See Transportation Map)



Highland Avenue is a narrow two lane local road serving Peapack and Gladstone. The Methany Center driveway is at the terminus of the improved section of Highland Avenue opposite the existing driveway to the Natirar main house. The Virgin Spa is proposing only emergency access to Highland Avenue utilizing the existing Natirar driveway onto Highland Avenue. There are also about 100 feet of frontage on the Natirar County Park tract along improved Highland Avenue. This narrow "flagstaff" is unimproved and there is an open drainage swale through this area; topography would be suitable for site access with appropriate grading to provide, at a minimum a sidewalk and equestrian trail connection, if the Virgin Spa driveway cannot be shared. This will need to be further addressed in the planning of both facilities.



Lake Road provides access to a number of large estates in Far Hills and to Ravine Lake located further north of Natirar along the North Branch of the Raritan River. The River Trail along the North Branch ends at Highland Avenue (unimproved) with the stone arch bridge over the North Branch of the Raritan currently providing a pedestrian and equestrian connection to Lake Road. It is not known the condition of the stone arch bridge and whether it is capable of handling vehicular traffic including emergency vehicles. (The Somerset County Engineer did not study this bridge.) Any restrictions to the connection of the undeveloped Highland

Avenue right-of-way to Lake Road need to be discussed with Far Hills Borough. The Natirar property survey identifies certain deed limitations for access to Lake Road. For example, Block 23, Lot 23.04 was permitted to use Lake Road for access; however the survey notes that 'the Borough's present position with respect to Highland Avenue is that it shall remain closed to the public from municipal boundary to the Kate Macy Ladd driveway' (Natirar Survey, Note Filed Map No 1869).



Sunnybranch Road terminates in a cul-de-sac about 400 feet south of Natirar (in Far Hills). At present, there is no access from this road.

Internal Natirar Circulation

Existing driveways provide good access and circulation around most of Natirar. The driveway network internal to Natirar, which includes the entrance drive (Natirar Drive) up to the Natirar main house and estate outbuildings (Virgin Spa leased area), is about a one-mile long scenic drive winding along the North Branch and then up the steeper forested slopes to the estate grounds. Natirar Drive splits about ½ mile from Peapack Road turning left to the Grey Barns complex which is about 800 feet upslope. Taking the driveway past the Grey Barns complex traverses the bench in the wooded hillside linking to a stone and dirt drive that provides access to the north side of Natirar to Peapack Road. From the Grey Barns complex, this road is about ½ mile long.

Taking Natirar Drive and then continuing to follow along the North Branch along the existing paved/gravel drive (River Trail) provides access along the eastern edge of Natirar. The steep wooded slopes with exposed areas of bedrock along the river trail provide a scenic vista and setting with view of the estate homes along Lake Road in Far Hills. The River Trail from the Bridge #1 to the Highland Avenue unimproved right-of-way at the boundary of Natirar is a distance of approximately ¾ mile. The River Trail ends at the Highland Avenue right-of-way. A closed driveway to the Blair estate continues further north. At this point, the stone arches bridge crosses the North Branch linking to Lake Road.



The River Trail wraps back up the steep wooded slope linking to the entrance drive to the Virgin Spa. The driveway connections between the Virgin Spa and Natirar Park will need to be further assessed as planning proceeds. A second drive is located near the northern site boundary (North Trail) which travels about 1200 feet east then veers south along the ridge slope to the Grey Barn complex.

Crossing the North Branch at Bridge #1 into Far Hills, the stone drive traverses the wooded slopes to the upper field areas and provides driveway access to the Hay Barn. From Peapack Road to Sunnybranch Road is over ¾ mile distance.

There is limited access to the lower 18 acre property (Lot 1, Block 7) in Far Hills between the railroad right-of way and the North Branch. There is an underpass (dated 1910) under the railroad tracks. Drainage is blocked on the south side of the underpass with stones and branches. There is limited park frontage along Peapack Road south of the North Branch Bridge, which may provide access to this area if a trail is cleared at some point.

Access Driveway Considerations

A limited traffic investigation was made of the current driveways serving Natirar to determine if there are any potential problems for future use. The Transportation Map identifies existing driveway locations. Overall some limited sight distance problems (that can be resolved with road shoulder bank reduction and site clearing) has been identified. The following details the results of this traffic access investigation.

Point 1 – Far Hills Farm Complex – Southern Drive



This is the existing southern driveway on the west side of Peapack Road, providing access to Elm Cottage and the Far Hills Farms complex. The gravel driveway is the southern entrance of a loop driveway to this property. Sight distance from drive to left (looking north onto Peapack Road) is presently limited by fence and hedge along frontage of property just north of drive; removing portion of hedge would result in acceptable sight distance. Sight distance from drive to right (looking south on Peapack Road) is also presently limited by trees on the easterly side of Peapack Road on each side of the North Branch of Raritan River. This condition would be most

severe when leaves are on trees with only a partial impact on sight distance after the fall. Trimming of trees and brush would result in acceptable sight distance.

Point 2 – Far Hills Farm – Northern Drive



This is the existing northern driveway connecting to the west side of Peapack Road. The sight distance from the drive to the left (looking north on Peapack Road) is limited by embankment along the west side of Peapack Road. Regrading would provide acceptable sight distance. The sight distance to the right (looking south on Peapack Road) is acceptable.

Point 3 – Ash Cottage Drive

This long, narrow lot is bordered by the easterly side of Peapack Road and the westerly side of the North Branch of the Raritan River. The southern limit of this lot is the Peapack Road Bridge over the North Branch of the River and the northern limit is the New Jersey Transit railroad. The existing drive leads to the small parking area for Ash Cottage. Sight distances from this driveway are acceptable. This drive and parking area could be used for access to the west bank of the North Branch of the Raritan River. Anglers may access the east bank by crossing through the river or walking over the Peapack Road Bridge.

Point 4 – Gatehouse Drive

This is the existing access drive located east side of Peapack Road north of NJ Transit Railroad and along the south side of Gate House. This drive is proposed for closure and a new entrance drive will be constructed. The Traffic Impact Assessment for the Virgin Spa at Natirar¹² described the visibility at this access point as “currently constrained due to the presence of an existing structure”, and that “the driveway will be relocated approximately 260 feet to the north”.

Point 5 – Proposed Natirar Entrance Drive



This proposed driveway would serve both Virgin Spa and Natirar County Park as the main entrance drive. The location of this proposed access was determined, in the field, by measuring from the driveway at Point 4 and by interpreting information on survey markers found on the site. The actual location could differ from our interpretations or may be modified in future proposals. Below comments are based on observations from said assumed location.

Regarding the sight distance to the left (looking south on Peapack Road), a large tree on the property partially limits sight of the northbound lane of Peapack Road to a point just south of the existing drive (Point 4). Moving the location of a driver's eye approximately 2 feet closer to the edge of Peapack Road provides acceptable sight distance. The recommended distance from the edge of pavement to the driver's eye is 14.5 feet. The above observations were made at 14.5 feet and 12.5 feet, respectively. Regarding the sight distance to the right (looking north on Peapack Road), the embankment along site frontage impacts the sight distance, which can be eliminated with regrading of the embankment.

Point 6 – Peapack Roadhouse Drive



This is the access drive to the Peapack Roadhouse on the east side of Peapack Road. Sight distance from the driveway is acceptable. A stone wall is located along the road shoulder in this area.

Point 7 – North Trail



This is the stone and dirt drive near the northerly limit of Natirar connecting onto the easterly side of Peapack Road. Sight distance to the left (looking south on Peapack Road) is impacted by the berm on the property along the easterly side of Peapack Road. Regrading could eliminate said impact. The sight distance to the right (looking north on Peapack Road) is acceptable.

Point 8 – Highland Avenue Frontage

The Natirar property frontage on improved Highland Avenue west of the Virgin Spa lease property and east of residential Lot 22.03, Block 28, is approximately 100 feet in width. The sight distance to the left (looking west on Highland Avenue) is acceptable. The sight distance to the right (looking east on Highland Avenue) is limited by trees and brush at the ditch along frontage of Virgin Spa site. Visibility improves after the fall when leaves fall off of the trees and brush. Please note that sight distances at this point would only be an issue if this location were developed for vehicular access.

¹² Traffic Impact Assessment for the Virgin Spa at Natirar, Gary Dean Associates, September 3, 2004.

Point 9 – Highland Avenue/Virgin Spa Emergency Access Drive

This location is the existing drive onto Highland Avenue that is now proposed as an emergency access to the Virgin Spa. The sight distance to left (looking west on Highland Avenue) is acceptable for the low speed in this area where Highland Avenue pavement terminates at the Methany Education and Medical Center driveway. The sight distance to the right (looking east on Highland Avenue right-of-way) is not applicable, since the Highland Avenue right-of-way at this point is on unpaved trail.



Point 10 – River Trail at Highland Drive

At this point a dirt path running along the westerly side of the North Branch of Raritan River intersects with the overgrown trail running east and west along the Highland Avenue right-of-way. The Highland Avenue trail connects to the eastern end of the Highland Avenue pavement west of Point 10, and to Lake Road passing over a multiple culvert bridge across the North Branch of the Raritan River, east of Point 10.

At present the trail is not passable by bicycle or horse back due to fallen trees and other obstacles. If cleared, the trail could be part of a continuous, permanent loop connecting the river trail with Highland Avenue pavement and then re-entering the site at Point 8. There is no defined trail or drive connecting Point 8 to the loop drive that passes by the Incinerator Building. If such a trail were created, it would allow for long hikes, bicyclist and equestrian rides without having to stop at some point and re-trace trails already traveled. Pedestrians, bicyclists and equestrians could use Point 10 as a neighborhood access from Lake Road.

Point 11 - River Trail at Virgin Spa Drive

This is the point where the upper end of a switchback stone and dirt drive ties into the future boundary line of the Virgin Spa site. At this location, visitors to the Natirar County Park would have to stop and turn back unless additional trails are created, either connecting to the Highland Avenue right-of-way trail or looping back towards the lower North Branch River Trail.

Point 12 – Concrete Bridge # 3

An evaluation has been completed of the bridges on the Natirar site by a Consultant to the Somerset County Engineer under a separate study.¹³ Concrete Bridge #3 carries the stone dirt road running along the river over a stream to the northerly end of an island bordered by the stream and the North Branch of the Raritan River. It has been rated satisfactory and minor repairs in the range of \$3,000 are required.

Point 13 – Concrete Bridge # 2

Concrete Bridge #2 carries the stone road from southerly end of the island over the stream. It has been also rated satisfactory requiring limited repairs in the range of \$3,000.

¹³ *Bridge Evaluation Survey Report*, dated August 2004, prepared for the Somerset County Office of County Engineer by Cherry, Weber & Associates, P.C.

Point 14 – Concrete Bridge # 1



Concrete Bridge #1 crosses over the North Branch of the Raritan River from Peapack and Gladstone into Far Hills. Repairs in the range of \$17, 000 are required to maintain this bridge.

Point 15 – Sunnybranch Road

A stone drive on Natirar connects with an unpaved drive that dead ends along the property line between off-site Lots 8 & 10, Block 6 in Far Hills. This is about 400 feet from the end of the Sunnybranch Road cul-de-sac. The historic Natirar property survey shows a driveway through this area connecting to the Far Hills train station; however, the Far Hills tax maps do not show a filed right-of-way in this 400' long section.

Point 16 – New Jersey Transit Railroad Underpass



The New Jersey Transit railroad tracks are elevated within Natirar. A railroad underpass exists with sufficient width and height to accommodate a passenger vehicle. The presence of an electric fence and standing water prevented being able to get actual measurements of the underpass. The ground surface at the time of the site visit under the underpass was completely covered with water of unknown depth. The

usefulness of this underpass to gain public access to the 18-acre property (Lot 1, Block 7) in Far Hills requires additional analysis to determine the extent and annual duration of the standing water. Certainly a trail for hiking or equestrian activities may be a possibility.

This 18-acre lot in Far Hills is bordered to the west by the North Branch, to the north and east by the elevated New Jersey Transit Railroad tracks and to the south by off-site residential Lot 2, Block 7. A 50' wide New Jersey Power and Light Company easement also crosses the lot. Access to this lot is limited to the railroad underpass, if the water issue can be resolved or to access via a short section of Peapack Road on the south side of the Peapack Road Bridge that passes over the river. For the Peapack Road access to be utilized, a small parking area could be developed at the Point 3 parking area for hikers and anglers.

Point 17 Bridge over Tributary to the North Branch

A fourth bridge crosses the tributary to the North Branch near the Incinerator Building. This drive over the tributary serves and can continue to serve as a maintenance road and public trail. It also provides alternative access to North Trail with secondary access to Peapack Road. The Engineer's Report indicates that this bridge will need to be rebuilt at a cost of approximately \$150,000.

Emergency Access

Natirar Park development will require consideration of emergency access to serve all areas of the 400-acre park, especially the remote locations along the River Trail and the upper Far Hills tract across the east side of the North Branch. Peapack Road will provide a direct connection for the major section of Natirar and the lower field areas. However, the upper fields in Far Hills, and the more remote River Trail areas are more challenging for access options especially to gain secondary access should other driveways be blocked. Possible secondary access options include:

- The use of Highland Avenue linked to the Virgin Spa emergency access road.

- Lake Road and the Highland Avenue extension over the stone arch bridge across the North Branch (depending upon the structural conditions on the bridge which was not evaluated in the County Engineer's Report).
- Sunnybranch Road in Far Hills links to Route 202 in Far Hills. It ends in a cul-de-sac about 400 feet from the Natirar tract. Since the Far Hills portion of Natirar (Lot 9, Block 6) can only be accessed by Bridge #1 from Peapack and Gladstone due to the North Branch and New Jersey Transit Railroad, it is desirable to provide emergency access from Sunnybranch Road.

The County would benefit if the proposed emergency access onto Highlands Avenue from the Virgin Spa site could be utilized jointly by the Spa and the Park. The County Park access to Highland Avenue could be developed as part of a perimeter loop trail, extending through the wooded sloping area between Highland Avenue and the Grey Barn Complex.

Parking

Depending on the type of activities planned for the County Park, suitable parking areas will need to be developed near the prime activity areas outside of the flood hazard area. For special larger events, off-site parking could be considered or use of lawn areas for temporary parking. Should off-site parking be developed, the on-site circulation will need to be designed to accommodate buses and have suitable drop off areas.

Other Transportation Modes

A comprehensive integrated circulation system with links for pedestrians, hikers, and equestrians around the site and linking to off-site trails is needed. Connections to the planned Peapack and Gladstone greenway shown along the railroad to Holland Avenue provide a link to the Peapack train station.

Bicycle Facilities

Somerset County has identified Peapack Road as a low traffic volume facility suitable for bicyclists. It is not signed as a County bike route. Further investigation should be made to determine improvements needed to support improved bicycle access to Natirar and links to the regional bike system.

Sidewalks/Greenways

There are no sidewalks along Peapack Road from Route 202 to Peapack and Gladstone. Pedestrian activity will be limited unless either a greenway trail network is implemented (in Peapack and Gladstone) in addition to sidewalks or joint pedestrian bicycle paths along the Natirar frontage. This would improve access to the Borough and could connect with the rail station in Peapack. The Peapack and Gladstone Master Plan recommends extending the sidewalk network through either inland trails or sidewalks. Pedestrian crossings, traffic calming measures and signage controls are needed between the activity areas at the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District area (Far Hills Farm) and the main park property including the Grey Barns complex area.

As indicated previously, there is a greenway system proposed in Peapack and Gladstone and along the North Branch in Bedminster and Far Hills. Natirar should plan the trail system to coordinate and accommodate these planned facilities, which will protect the environmental resources and provide linkages between open space and recreation facilities and other destination points including the train station in Peapack.

Equestrian Trails

All three municipalities have identified the importance of maintaining and augmenting their equestrian facilities. The development of Natirar should include equestrian trails and provide links to the off-site network. Three maps, Central Section Bridle Paths of the Somerset Hills Bridle Path Association October 1927, Hamilton Farm and Adjacent Properties, Bridle Paths, Roads, etc in Hunterdon, Morris and Somerset Counties in the State of New Jersey – 1935, and the Bridle Paths of the Somerset County Bridle Path Association – 1968, identify the location of trails through the Somerset Hills and into Morris County.

Review of the 1922 and 1968 Bridle Trail maps show bridle trails have historically traversed only a minor section of Natirar (the Ladd Estate), along the North Branch of the Raritan River near Highland Avenue and Lake Road crossing

south of the stone arch bridge. An extensive series of trails are shown north of Highland Avenue in Peapack and Gladstone including around Ravine Lake. At the end of the paved section of Highland Avenue at the proposed emergency entrance to Virgin Spa at Natirar and the Matheny Education and Medical Complex driveway, there is an equestrian trail sign directing toward the unimproved section of Highland Avenue east towards the North Branch and Lake Road and on Highland Avenue.

Transit

There are three train stations along the New Jersey Transit rail line in reasonable proximity to Natirar. The closest is in Peapack about 1 mile from the western edge of the Natirar. Further west is the Gladstone station. The Far Hills train station is about 2 miles to the east of Natirar near Route 202. Train service can be a good option should a programming venues draw visitors from outside of the immediate area. This could be coupled with shuttle service from the station with more agile visitor walking especially if there are sidewalks or improved trails in place.

Bus Service - No regular bus service provides direct connections to Natirar.

Infrastructure

Water

NJ American Water Company provides water service to this area. Also according to Natirar estate staff, there are six wells on the property, two that are presently used and there is a connection to public water. There is a 60,000-gallon reservoir and 6,000-gallon holding tank near the main residence (October 2002 Natirar Report).

Sewer

Natirar is located outside of adopted Wastewater Management Plan sewer service areas in all three municipalities. The sewer service area serves part of Peapack and Gladstone in the area adjacent to Natirar. Wastewater disposal for Natirar will likely be accomplished on-site; however it is noted that certain areas of the tract have soils exhibiting severe constraints for on-site septic system facilities.

Alternative sewage disposal methods should be considered including innovative systems and the use of portable toilets. The condition of the existing septic systems serving the Far Hills Farm, the Peapack Roadhouse and Ash Cottage has not been examined as part of this study. These facilities should be inspected in the next development-planning phase.

Gas

PSE& G provides gas service to the tract.

Electric

Jersey Central Power and Light provides electric service to the tract.

Conclusions - Assessment

Based upon the results of the foregoing tract assessment, certain key findings should be summarized to lead into the next planning phase.

- Natirar 's cultural resources provide an important source upon which to focus program efforts. There are certain priority properties such as the Grist Mill, Elm Cottage and the Gatehouse, which should be preserved and reused in an appropriate manner. The cultural resources should be documented and suitably protected with a sensitivity to its historic value. Buildings need to be stabilized with certain immediate priorities especially including the Grist Mill. .
- Local and regional planning efforts should be addressed with trail linkages to the Peapack Brook Greenway and the North Branch Greenway.
- Equestrian facilities are an important recreational activity and the need to augment the Somerset Hills facilities with bridle trails and links in addition to other equestrian uses should be a prime programming effort.
- The environmental constraints of the wetlands, flood plains and C-1 waters will limit construction in the River Terrace and Cow Meadow section of the tract. Recreation facilities can be constructed with certain limitations.
- The site lends itself to educational programming tied to both cultural resources and environmental resources. A comprehensive plan should be developed to address this educational opportunities.
- Fishing should be promoted at the park given the Peapack Brook is a trout production water and the North Branch is a trout maintenance water. Fisherman access, parking, and procedures will need to be developed.
- Transportation plan should evaluate traffic calming options along Peapack Road to facilitate access between Natirar North and South. Parking plans should be phased and coordinated with further building restoration efforts.
- The Virgin Spa viewshed easement and drive easement together with the Peapack Road easement (to Peapack and Gladstone) further limits development while protecting the scenic views on the tract.

PARK PLAN ASSUMPTIONS



Facilities Program Evaluation

Compatibility with Plan Goals and Objectives

The next step in the park planning process was to evaluate potential uses for Natirar. The prior inventory and evaluation of site conditions – natural, manmade, cultural, and the knowledge of the County and local planning context set the stage for evaluating appropriate uses for the Park. This involved a balancing of the identified Park goals and objectives with the site constraints and opportunities. To reiterate the refined planning goals for the Park are to:

- Preserve landscapes – stewardship
- Preserve critical environmental resources
- Provide regional recreation experiences
- Serve county's population centers and unmet regional recreation needs
- Enhance the quality of life

The main objectives to implement these goals are to:

- Plan recreation opportunities that are compatible with surrounding land use and appropriate to the historic cultural setting
- Preserve Natirar's cultural resources
- Use Natirar's resources for public education
- Develop an educational program that builds on the many unique natural attributes of Natirar
- Coordinate with local and county greenway and trails plans

To achieve these goals, the site was organized into major activity areas to assess possible uses and activities for the structures and site attributes of these areas. (See Activity Areas Map).

Program Assessment

A program assessment was undertaken. Examples of parks and recreation facilities were presented to the Natirar Advisory Committee. Most of the highlighted facilities were in New Jersey and were either public parks (state, county or municipal) or in not-for-profit ownership. Facilities were selected with similar elements to those of Natirar such as being part of an estate or historic farmstead or structures among others.

For the purposes of this assessment, the Natirar tract was segregated into broad "Activity Areas" which reflected cultural elements such as the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District (Far Hills Farm), the Grey Barns Complex, the Hay Barn, the entrance area (Peapack Viewshed), landforms such as the Cow Meadow and lower field area and the natural constraints of the wetlands and floodplain in the River Terrace area. Options for possible use were identified and examples of parks and public facilities were presented that provide appropriate programming options consistent with the park goals and objectives.

In addition a Program Survey was distributed to each Advisory Committee member to better assess and rank site programming options. The results of this survey were used to define the park program. The program was further refined with the Advisory Committee.



Certain activities, such as a Living History Farm to reuse the existing farm buildings, were ruled out as being too site intensive. Also similar farm facilities were available nearby such as Fosterfields, a 200 acre site in Morris Township, New Jersey. Uses such as a performing arts center were also ruled out given the size of the existing structures and interior space limitation of the barn buildings.

Arts related uses were strongly considered in this survey as being an appropriate activity that could be accommodated within the existing structures such as the Red Frame Barn at Far Hills Farm and the Grey Barns complex. Gardens including a children's garden and rehabilitation of the pond were considered appropriate at the Grey Barns complex.



The Grist Mill is considered a priority structure for preservation and reuse. Successful examples of other similar mills presented in the survey including the Red Mill Museum Village a nine acre site, which is owned and maintained by a not-for-profit entity in the Town of Clinton. The museum and grounds include a museum,



art exhibits, and functioning outbuildings related to the associated quarry. Nearby the Hunterdon Museum of Art, also owned by a not-for-profit organization, is located in a refurbished historic stone grist mill. Prallsville Mills in Stockton, New Jersey is a former renovated mill with an ongoing program of art shows, children's art camp and lectures.

The Far Hills Farm and the Grey Barn complex could provide opportunities for a variety of activities including office space for not-for-profit groups, park orientation centers and displays, cultural activities. An example of a similar facility is the Smithville Mansion in Eastampton, New Jersey. It is a 280 acre Burlington County owned facility which includes a refurbished mansion and outbuildings and is used for County offices and passive recreational activities such as pedestrian and biking trails, canoeing and picnicking.



Another example is the Thompson Park in Lincroft, New Jersey. It is a 665 acre park that is part of the Monmouth County Park System. The size and park structures can be comparable to Natirar. At Thompson Park, in addition to the recreation facilities including a visitor center, playground, picnic areas, and trails, there is an estate housing, rustic barn theater, residences for park employees, offices and the barns are used as a craft center, storage and vehicle repair facility.



Art centers such as Peter's Valley Craft Center in Layton, New Jersey successfully reused historic structures to house arts and crafts activities in an interpretive village setting.

Other activities include an education center for fine crafts, art shows and crafts classes. The Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, a 35 acre nonprofit owned facility, is the site of the former Mercer County fair grounds and includes refurbished buildings for indoor art galleries, museum shop, and an outdoor sculpture garden.

The need to identify and partner with not-for-profit groups to rehabilitate and use certain buildings was considered an appropriate approach to reuse of the park structures. Rental of buildings for private events could be considered but at a limited scale in the Park.

Equestrian activities are an important activity in the Somerset Hills. Interest in expanding equestrian trails and facilities for Cross County riding was identified through public input at the Advisory Committee meetings and through the local master plans. Somerset County Parks Commission currently maintains a full service stable at Lord Stirling Stable in Basking Ridge. Activities include on-site houses, children's camp, lessons, trail riding and a low level cross county course. Other nearby equestrian operations include the Christie Hoffman Park in Tewksbury, which is a 150 acre municipally owned facility. With the interest in expanding the equestrian trails in the Somerset Hills area through this Natirar property, the Hay Barn site was seen as a good fit for an equestrian cross county course.

The Cow Meadow was felt to be an appropriate area for special events activities. The area is floodprone so permanent construction should be avoided. Use of this area for polo had mixed support; there appears to be a need for a polo venue but field maintenance costs was a concern.

For the Peapack viewshed area, maintaining the viewshed was considered as an important goal for the Park. There was overwhelming support of the Advisory Committee for the Gatehouse restoration.

The River Terrace was considered appropriate for uses such as trails, environmental interpretation with restoration activities as needed. Fishing activities should be promoted and plans developed to permit such activities while protecting the stream bank. Possibly use a permit or lottery process and a catch and release program was suggested by the Advisory Committee.

Picnic areas and seating areas were identified as appropriate uses for the park; however the use should be limited, avoiding picnic groves and intensive group use. Possibly there could be special permits for groups on the 'island' (between bridges #2 and #3).

Public Education Opportunities

Another plan objective is to use Natirar's resources for public education and to develop an educational program that builds on the many unique natural and cultural attributes of Natirar. Research to document and develop an integrated program should be an important aspect of planning for this educational program. This program can be developed through educational displays, interpretive signs, and workshops. (Recommendations for both natural resource restoration and culture resource interpretation was provided in the prior sections.)

PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Overview Proposed Park Program

The Concept Plan shows major site constraints such as the viewshed easements and flood hazard areas, and steep topography together with building complexes, the trails network and generalized use areas. No new structures are proposed for the Natirar County Park; only the renovation and reuse of the existing buildings are proposed at this time.

The major theme of the park is a historic landscape of a unique Somerset Hills estate and farm. The Far Hills Farm in Bedminster is an historic site and part of the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District. This complex will serve as the focus for park orientation, a historic museum and center. The Gatehouse along Peapack Road is another priority historic structure that may be used as a Park Ranger station. The Grey Barns and related farmsteads are another segment of the Somerset Hills history of agrarian development; this area is a prime location for an Arts and Crafts Center and other cultural activities.

A trails network planned for Natirar will link to planned regional greenways along the Peapack Brook and the North Branch. The trails also provide hiking, walking and bike access to a diversity of settings on Natirar. The planned equestrian trails will link to the extensive Somerset Hills horse trails network; a planned equestrian cross-country riding facility in the Hay Barn area would complement these equestrian resources.

The buildings provide the opportunity to serve as education resources and facilities for not-for-profit cultural organizations that may be interested in using the buildings for their activities. The ultimate use of each building will depend upon the interests of local and county organizations and the available funding to renovate and maintain them.

The following section summarizes the overall planning concept for each activity area. This is followed by a subsequent section, which provides a detailed evaluation of building resources within each area. (See Park Concept Plan).

Park Activity Areas

Rural Industrial Historic District



The Peapack Brook Rural Industrial District includes the historic Far Hills Farm complex in Bedminster Township. The Elm Cottage is at a prime location along

Peapack Road framed by mature trees along the road. The Grist Mill is a priority structure for preservation and reuse. Together with the other buildings in this farm complex including the Red Frame Barn, Oak Cottage and the Corn Crib, it is an intact cluster of buildings that provide opportunities for a multiplicity of uses as an orientation center, museum, exhibition space for public gatherings, art and crafts spaces and residential uses.

Outside of the historic building complex, the two contemporary Morton Barns on the upper hillside can provide space for storage of park maintenance equipment. Use of the upper hill plateau for overflow visitor parking within walking distance to the Far Hills Farm complex can be readily screened from Peapack Road. A small parking area providing handicapped spaces and limited visitor parking could also be sited near the Grist Mill.

Peapack Brook is a protected C-1 water which limited new development activities within the stream buffer area to 150 feet for existing development and 300 feet for new construction since this area is within the Highlands Protection area. The floodprone area along Peapack Brook is another development constraint. Trails should be provided along Peapack Brook linking to the extended planned greenway system in Peapack and Gladstone Boro.

Peapack Viewshed

The Peapack Road viewshed is an important element of the open scenic vista of the park. Long views from the road catch glimpses of the Natirar main house at the highest ridge plateau of the tract. A viewshed easement restricts grading and development within this easement. The main entrance to the Natirar Park North and the Virgin Spa at Natirar will be relocated about 260 feet north of the existing drive at the Gatehouse and the existing drive closed. An overall Park signage plan should be developed. There are two existing buildings, the Peapack Roadhouse and the Gatehouse, in the Peapack Viewshed area.



Peapack Roadhouse

The Peapack Roadhouse is a ranch house that currently serves as the Natirar tenant farmer's residence. It is set back from the road and screened by landscaping and a stonewall along the Peapack Road shoulder. The property has separate access to Peapack Road and the sight distance from the driveway is acceptable.

Gate House



The Gatehouse along Peapack Road is an historic building that is part of the Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District. It could be renovated to its original condition (as evidenced by the historic photo of the home along rural Peapack Road). It would be suitable for use as a Park Ranger Station and

office. Limited parking could be provided off the existing driveway; there are currently about 3 parking spaces along the drive area. The main gate and drive should be blocked given the new entrance drive to be constructed by the Virgin Spa.

Grey Barns Complex



There are 10 buildings in this farm complex include three large barns that lend themselves to an arts and crafts center and related storage uses. There is good access

to this area from the main park drive. Potential parking nodes can be provided on the lawn among the trees south of the barns. The Virgin Spa overflow parking area (when constructed) could also be used for shared parking. Water is available to the complex and on-site septic system facilities are needed.



This area provides a unique setting along the tributary to the North Branch and around the pond at the entrance to the Grey Barns complex. Activities such as a woodland garden along the narrow wooded trail near to the Incinerator Building and possibly a sculpture garden near the pond area with an amphitheater area for outdoor gatherings and concerts near the hillside east of the pond. A

children's garden could also be developed in this area. Improvements to the pond are required including desilting to prevent eutrophication and special landscape planting treatment. Daylighting the pond outfall stream should be investigated. The Grey Barns complex is part of the early agrarian history of the property. As part of the overall cultural site investigation, the pre-Natirar farm sites in this area should be identified.

Cow Meadow



Use in the Cow Meadow is restricted due to the Natirar Spa viewshed easement and the flood hazard area delineation, which restricts permanent structures in this low-lying area. The Cow Meadow, which is about 40 acres, could be used for special events and unstructured recreation activities and trails. There is a prime view of the Natirar main house along the lower drive, which can be emphasized through the park design with a potential sitting areas and identification sign. The Entry Field area, which is about 14 acres and located along the tree lined Natirar drive entrance, is another area for passive recreation activities, picnicking under the trees, and special events. Most

of the Entry Field is also located within the flood hazard area.

Hay Barn



The hay barn is the only structure in this open upper field in Far Hills. On the second highest plateau of the tract, the long views across the field are defined by the wooded slopes along the northern Natirar plateaus. The fields are surrounding by deciduous woods which frame the open field. Water is available to the Hay Barn area and the use of portable toilets is an option.



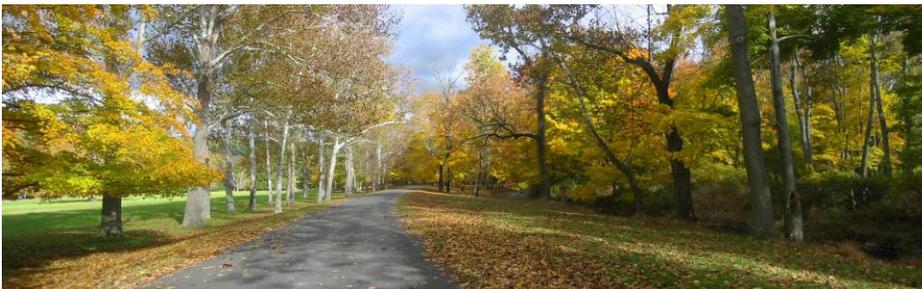
The only access to the Hay Barn Activity Area is across the North Branch utilizing Bridge #1 through the woodlands along the River Terrace and upslope to this open field setting. This area should be focused on equestrian cross-country activities with the Hay Barn repaired and used for storage. This area can also serve as a trail link to the 18-acre lower Far Hills tract

between the railroad right-of-way and the North Branch utilizing the railroad underpass.

River Terrace



This area along both the North Branch and Peapack Brook is a passive recreational setting which can provide passive open space with walking trails, bike paths and equestrian trails. Fishing along the Peapack Brook and the North Branch should be accommodated in any plan. The park entry drive follows



a mature tree allee' along the North Branch to the Virgin Spa entry gate. A viewshed easement limits park activities within 200 feet on either side of the main park entry drive.

Planning of the walking and equestrian trail network is a primary effort. The equestrian trails should be coordinated with the local Somerset Hills Bridle Club and linked to the wider regional bridle trail network. Initially the existing drives can be used for primary access for vehicles and walkers. The trails should be linked to both the planned North Branch of the Raritan River Greenway and the Peapack Brook Greenway. Benches and scattered picnic tables and related improvements are proposed for this River Terrace area.

The River Terrace also encompasses the wetlands in the lower Far Hills tract between the railroad and the North Branch. This area is currently inaccessible except by the most ardent hikers. Access is limited to the railroad underpass from the Hay Barn area and limited frontage on Peapack Road near the bridge. This area should be further evaluated to assess best options for trails access. Given its environmental constraints and location, access to this area will be a long-term project.



Peapack Island located between Bridges #2 and #3 is within the River Terrace area. There is an existing stone barbeque, stonewalls and other remnants of the Natirar estate development. This is a special area that could have walk-in picnicking facilities.

Ash Cottage



The Ash Cottage property has direct access to the North Branch with a small parking area associated with the existing residence. Sight distances from this driveway are acceptable and the small parking area could be expanded with care taken to meet stream buffer requirements and utilizing permeable surface for parking. Ash Cottage is in fair to poor condition with basement level flooding. It would require extensive costly renovations prior to occupancy for any use and its demolition is a consideration. This would provide additional room for parking and fishing access to this prime stream front site.

Overlook Point



The overlook is the highest point on the Natirar park tract outside of the Virgin Spa lease area which it adjoins. Trails should be developed to link this area to the lower park through the North Trail and to the Grey Barns complex.

Building Program

Rural Industrial Historic District

The Peapack Brook Rural Industrial Historic District area includes the historic Far Hills Farm complex in Bedminster Township, which consists of Elm Cottage, Grist Mill, Corn Crib, Oak Cottage and the Red Frame Barn. Outside this group to the north, two modern metal Morton Barns are located on the upper hillside.



Elm Cottage, building #1, is a 5,817 square foot center hall Victorian building that was formerly a residence. It is in fair to poor condition, requiring roof and drainage repairs, as well as interior finishes upgrades. Elm Cottage has potential for several uses, including office space, an orientation center for the site or a location for a rental event. Mechanical and electrical upgrades are required for a business use.



The Grist Mill, building #2, formerly used as a mill, is just over 4,000 square feet. The interior remains as it was while in use as a mill, but the heavy timber structure is in poor condition and the building is in urgent need of a new roof along with structural and interior repairs. The Grist Mill would be an excellent building for exhibitions, museum space or public gatherings and will require a full rehabilitation.



The Corn Crib, building #3, is 868 square feet excluding the loft, and was originally used to store corn. Currently it serves as a storage shed for farm equipment as well. The building is in fair condition and requires a new roof, doors and some siding replacement. The proposed use for the building is for continued use as storage.



Oak Cottage, building #4, is a residential building approximately 2,300 square feet in size. Although recently vacated, this building has been utilized as a residence. In general, Oak Cottage is in fair condition requiring roof repairs and interior as well as exterior finish upgrades. This building would be a suitable location as a residence for Park security personnel.



The Red Frame Barn, building #5, is a timber-frame building set into the hillside. It has traditionally been used for hay storage and continues to be used for this purpose today. The barn portion is two stories with hay storage in the upper double-height space. The lower level of the barn is used for storage. On the west side of the barn, an attached garage structure is enclosed on three sides and houses farm

equipment. The Red Barn is 3,113 square feet in size and is in fair condition requiring roof and carpentry repairs. Several uses would be suitable for this structure including maintenance and/or parking at the garage section, a concession stand at the lower level of the barn and artists' loft space at the upper level. Limited renovations would be required for concession use, and general refurbishment with mechanical and electrical upgrades are required for artists' use. The locations of the angled, heavy timber framing members in the upper level of the barn may limit useable space and head height. However, these exposed timber members allow the structure that supports the entire building to be seen and can be incorporated into the layout of the artists' loft space.



On the north section of the tract are two modern Morton Barns, buildings #6 and 7. These structures are constructed primarily of corrugated metal with a wood truss system that supports the roof, and are currently fenced for livestock. Both buildings are in good condition and could be used to store maintenance equipment for the park.

East of the Rural Industrial Historic District and across Peapack Road is Ash Cottage, building #8. This residential building is just under 3,000 square feet, and is in fair to poor condition. Water from the river reaches the basement level during heavy rains and floods, and interior settlement cracks are visible. General renovation would be required prior to any occupancy of this building. Potential uses include continued use as a residence or a fishing supply shop.



Peapack Viewshed



The Peapack Viewshed along Peapack Road includes the Peapack Roadhouse and the Gate House. The Peapack Roadhouse, building #10, is a ranch-style house, 3,282 square feet in size. This residential building is currently occupied by the farmer who farms the adjacent land. The building is in fair condition, requiring a new roof and some shingle siding replacement, along with chimney repointing and

drainage repairs. Two possible uses for this building include continued use as a residence or possible office space. Upgrades for electrical and telecommunications (phone, fax, computers) are required for an office use.



Approximately 2,100 square feet in size, the Gate House, building #9, sits at the edge of Peapack Road. The structure retains much historic integrity, and is in fair condition. This building is ideally situated for use as a Park Ranger Station, and occupancy of the building is recommended after a full restoration/rehabilitation has been completed. The

restoration would return the exterior appearance of the building to its original configuration, reopening the center of the porch as seen in the historic image. In addition, restoration would include exterior work such as repairing cracks, removing incompatible materials, repairing leaks and general painting. Interior work would include interior finishes repair and restoration, kitchen and bathroom upgrades and general painting.

Grey Barns Complex

The Grey Barns Complex consists of ten buildings. Three of these buildings are large barns, three are medium-sized barn and utility buildings, and four are small storage and/or former animal coop structures. Square footages range from 4,600 square feet down to 84 square feet. Building conditions are typically fair for the large and medium-sized buildings and poor for the smaller storage buildings. Those in fair condition require exterior building envelope work, including roof and drainage repairs. Structures in poor condition are in need of new roofs, foundation work and are typically structurally unstable. All of these buildings would be suitable for use as a seasonal arts and crafts center, where artisans could display and sell their wares. The smaller buildings would be ideal for storage use. Electrical and mechanical upgrades to the large and medium-sized buildings would typically be required prior to use for arts and crafts, and the smaller buildings that are structurally unstable would require structural upgrades. Consideration has been given to the larger buildings for use as a performing arts area. However, due to space limitations of interior configurations, use of these buildings for a performance space would require major interventions that would work against the physical characteristics of the building. Use as a seasonal arts and crafts center would be a less intense use for the building.



Building 11



Building 12



Building 13



Building 14



Building 15



Building 16



Building 17



Building 18



Building 19



Building 20



The Incinerator Building, #22, is located just north of the Grey Barn Complex. This compact building is 340 square feet in area, and has until recently been used as an incinerator for the site. The building is in poor condition with a partial roof collapse and deteriorated windows and doors, but would be an ideal location for a ceramics studio. In addition to a general interior and exterior rehabilitation, mechanical and electrical upgrades would be required.

Hay Barn



The Hay Barn, building #21, is located in the open upper field in Far Hills. Access to this area is across the North Branch and River Terrace. The Hay Barn is 2,364 square feet in area and has historically been used for storage of large, harvested bales of hay. The building did not weather well during the winter of 2004 and is in poor condition, with roof and select siding replacement necessary. This building would be an excellent location for use as either storage or equestrian activities serving

as a trail link to other areas. Electrical upgrades will be required.

Natirar County Park Action Plan



Action Plan Overview

The Action Plan provides an agenda for phased development at Natirar County Park. Phase 1 addresses the initial park launch which should be coordinated with the Virgin Spa at Natirar opening since this will open up public access to the Natirar Park North property. The Grey Barns Complex could be used for initial park public parking and limited public services (water and portable toilets) provided until infrastructure plan is developed. All buildings on the tract should be secured and priority buildings (Grist Mill, Elm Cottage, Gatehouse, Hay Barn) stabilized. Natirar Drive with the relocated entry driveway by Virgin Spa will provide access to the Grey Barns and the Virgin Spa. The remaining drives should be closed to vehicle traffic but could be used for pedestrians and bicyclists. A signage plan should be developed and put into place for the park opening. Use of the Peapack Roadhouse and/or Oak Cottage for on-site residential park security should be implemented. Also transportation improvements should be planned and put into place to provide traffic calming along the park frontage.

The later phases would be determined as part of a staged implementation plan. The following Action Plan summarizes the next steps in the planning for Natirar. Suggested timeframe is presented as are estimated costs to complete selected activities. Additionally a table is provided with detailed information on costs for rehabilitation of each building based upon potential uses. A number of action items need to be completed during the first two years before the Park opening. This includes not only the activities needed to facilitate the initial park launch but other investigations to set the stage for the more detailed park design and implementation program. This includes but is not limited to cultural resources documentation, a Phase 1 environmental assessment, a detailed environmental inventory of site vegetation and fauna and detailed building utilization plans.

Coordination with not-for-profit groups to partner with the County to renovate and preserve park structures is a key component of the Plan. A Request for Proposals is one method that can be used to solicit interest. A plan should be developed to entertain these requests and to coordinate funding options through grants and loans.

PHASE 1 – PARK LAUNCH - NATIRAR PARK NORTH (2 YEARS)

- Open up park for limited public use
- Natirar Park North area (property east of Peapack Road)
 - Coordinate with the Virgin Spa opening – public access through main drive.
 - Permit public vehicle traffic up to Grey Barns Area only; close off other roads to public vehicular use at this time.
- Secure all existing buildings on site
- Stabilize priority buildings
- Utilize existing drives on site for trails and public access.
- Provide limited public services

FUTURE PHASES - To be determined as part of staged Park Utilization Plan

- **Far Hills Farm**
 - Interim uses until buildings are rehabilitated
 - ❖ Walking/ hiking
 - ❖ Picnicking
 - ❖ Peapack Brook trails
 - Cultural complex with Grist Mill (museum/exhibition), Elm Cottage (offices/orientation center), Red Frame Barn (artist space, concessions, storage), Oak Cottage (park employee residence)
 - Morton Barns (storage)
- **Equestrian Facilities @ Hay Barn**
 - Bridle trails
 - Cross country riding school
- **Grey Barns Complex**
 - Art and Crafts facilities
 - Cultural exhibits
 - Gardens, outdoor sculpture display
 - Storage
- **Cow Meadow (includes Entry Field)**
 - Passive recreation activities
 - Special Events
- **Educational Programs – Cultural and environmental resources**

PHASE 1 ACTION ITEMS

1. Secure Park

- Protect and secure all buildings
- Stabilize priority buildings: Grist Mill, Elm Cottage, Incinerator Building, Grey Barn Storage Buildings (#13-16), Hay Barn (+/- \$ 182K)
- Conduct Environmental Assessment
 - Phase 1 EA (\$7,500), Phase 2 as required (TBD).
 - Site cleanup and removal of hazardous materials (electrical wires, trash, etc.)
- Repair Bridges #1,2 and 3 (\$23K)

2. Grey Barn development

- Provide portable toilets for visitors
- Provide drinking water – assess existing water system conditions
- Utilize existing gravel area at Grey Barn area for parking

3. Security

- Provide 24/7 on-site park personnel

- Use Peapack Roadhouse as residence for park security personnel (currently inhabited by farmer)
 - Alternatively use Oak Cottage
4. **Park Ranger Station**
 - Peapack Roadhouse (interim use as Ranger Station until Gatehouse is renovated; ranger station could be a limited use in association with use as a park security residence.
 - Gatehouse (limited use until rehabilitation undertaken; undertake a utilities assessment -water/sewer/electrical for interim use)
 5. **Develop Park Signage Plan**
 - Install park signage
 - Clear and mark existing trails
 - Provide maps or sign guides for hikers
 6. **Natirar transportation improvements**
 - New entrance drive (to be constructed by Virgin Spa)
 - Close gatehouse entry drive
 - Conduct and implement transportation plan (see below)
 7. **Provide trash storage facilities at key locations; require carry in and carry out trash.**

NATIRAR PARK PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM - NEXT PHASES

Listed below of the various plan elements that need to be coordinated as part of the Natirar Park Development Program.

Cultural Resources

- Develop and maintain a plan archival storage of documents and artifacts (high priority; 12 months)
- Obtain State and National Register Listing of property (12-18 months; rural industrial district \$8-12K)
- Prepare documentation of Natirar cultural resources; *(12-18 months; \$8-15K; this could be combined with research for National Register listing and fee would be less.)*
- Develop targeted cultural resources interpretation project *(2-3 years; cost variable)*
- Undertake targeted restoration and adaptive reuse of structures and site *(TBD)*

Develop Building Utilization Plan *(2 Years)*

- Develop building preservation plans for historic buildings
- Develop detailed building conditions plans for non-historic buildings
- Determine funding availability (grants, fundraising, leasing); consider establishing 501(c) 3 not-for-profit corp. for fundraising and grants
- Prioritize improvements
- Prepare timetable for renovations
- Identify and contract with not-for-profit groups for building leasing
- Prepare on-going maintenance schedule

Develop Environmental Resources Plan

- Conduct a Phase 1 Environmental Assessment for hazardous wastes and Phase 2 (as required) *(priority; 6 months)*
- Conduct a detailed investigation of site vegetation and wildlife *(6 months; \$15K)*
- Develop a park-specific environmental education agenda -geology, wetlands, wildlife and plants *(2-3 years)*
- Coordinate environmental and cultural resources education programs *(2-3 years)*
- Assess site remediation/enhancement projects such as Grey Barn pond and stream restoration *(3+ years)*
- Assess Far Hills lower tract wetlands for special trails development program *(3+years)*
- Identify and seek funding for pilot environmental studies/plans *(2+ years)*

Transportation Plan

- Conduct transportation assessment *(6 months, \$7,500)*

- Identify traffic calming measures – Peapack Road
- Provide safe access between North and South park properties
- Provide wayfinding and identification signs (Park signage program)
- Evaluate traffic speed reduction east of Railroad Bridge
- Coordinate efforts with County Engineer
- Bicycle facilities
 - Coordinate with County Bike route
 - Establish bike friendly signage and route designation
 - Provide on-site bike racks and storage
- Repair Bridges
 - Bridges #1,2, and 3 (*priority, 1 year, \$23K*)
 - Bridge #4 (near Incinerator Building, \$150K)
- Parking Plan
 - Develop parking facilities phased in coordination with Building Utilization decisions
 - Develop special events parking plan

Trails Plan (2+ years)

- Design Trails Plan (*12-18 months*)
- Phase 1 Trails
 - Use existing drives for walking and mountain bikes
- Phase 2 Trails (2+ years)
 - Peapack Brook Greenway connection
 - North Branch Greenway connections
 - Complete park loop trail
 - Highlands Avenue right-of-way trail link
 - Connection to Overlook
 - Coordinate Lake Road connection with Far Hills Borough
- Phase 3 Far Hills Lower Tract trails (subject to wetlands delineation)

Equestrian Plan (2+years)

- Work with local bridle trail association to mark out trails and links to existing trails network
- Develop and finalize equestrian trails plan in coordination with overall trails planning program
- Contract with not -for profit organization to establish cross-country riding facility at Hay Barn area

Park Programming Plan (2+years)

- Special events programming
- Education programs – cultural / environmental
- Arts

Building Action Plan

Introduction to Summary Table

The building descriptions in the Building Program Summary Table indicate the conditions and possible uses for each building, as well as general type of work that is required to improve the conditions. Costs for building improvements are shown in the Building Use Cost Estimate, along with key information about each building. These building improvement costs are conceptual in nature, and were obtained by using a cost per square foot allowance based upon current construction index such as Means Cost Data and our experience with similar projects. The estimates depend to some extent on the size and existing condition of the building (good, fair, poor, etc.). The cost per square foot for stabilization is less than the cost for a full rehabilitation/restoration, since a significantly greater amount of work would be involved in the full restoration.

The costs indicated are provided according to the potential use of the buildings listed in the Cost Estimate chart. If only once cost is shown where several possible uses are indicated, the cost is the same for all uses. Costs are for work performed on the actual structures, and excludes external items such as site utility work, including electrical or water lines, septic systems, connections, and hazardous materials inspection and abatement.

Rehabilitation/restoration costs are for creating fully, permanently occupiable spaces, and would occur in the next 18 months to 5 years. It is possible for some buildings to be utilized for storage after stabilization work has been completed, but prior to a full rehab/restoration. It should be noted that a moderate amount of cyclical maintenance will be required yearly on all buildings, regardless of the time frame for work.

Stabilization costs are for general maintenance repairs and exterior envelope work, including roofs and building drainage, and does not include costs for interior spaces, except for structural stabilization in some buildings. This is work necessary to allow the public to use the property, and to keep building deterioration from accelerating. This work should occur within the next 12-18 months. Also within this time frame, the Building Utilization Plan will be developed, including preservation plans for historic buildings, more detailed conditions assessments for non-historic buildings, and preparation of a timetable for renovations. This will allow for development of more precise cost projections, to coordinate with the County budget process.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the built resources in the Natirar Park follow the general recommendations for the gradual development of the Park over time. The overarching goal is to ensure that the appropriate resources in the Park are secured and protected for future use; and that development of the resources can occur gradually in ways that are both fundable and sustainable.

The first priority for the park is security of all buildings, stabilization of priority buildings, and allowing the public into the park for limited use. Priority 1 buildings for stabilization include:



- The Grist Mill, which has a collapsed roof, partial structural failure, severe water infiltration, failed gutters, windows and doors; this is a significant historic structure that should not be allowed to deteriorate further.



- Elm Cottage, which suffers from water infiltration mainly at the porch roofs; this significant building will be the centerpiece of the Rural Industrial District, and the porches should be maintained.



- Incinerator Building, which has also sustained a partial roof collapse and has deteriorated windows and doors; if the roof and windows of this building are not secured in the near term, it will be lost.



- Grey Barns Storage Buildings (#13-16), which are structurally unsound and require new foundations and straightening of the exterior walls; these small structures contribute significantly to the character of the site, and could be lost.



- Hay Barn, which requires roof and siding replacement; this building is on the verge of significantly accelerating deterioration.



- The Gatehouse, while somewhat distant from the rest of the Rural Industrial District, is an important historic resource with great restoration potential (see historic image under "Building Program"). If not utilized immediately, it needs to be carefully protected and mothballed to preserve it for the future.



- The Peapack Roadhouse is a modern "ranch house" of no particular historic significance to the Park. While it could be utilized as a Ranger Station and park security residence in the near term, it could also be considered for removal. If there is a choice to be made in developing Park Security facilities in this building or Oak Cottage, we would recommend a commitment of resources to Oak Cottage, as it is historically significant, and more important to ongoing use in the Park.



- Ash Cottage is the most problematic of the older buildings in the park. Located on the opposite side of Peapack Road from the Rural Industrial District, it can be argued that due to its age, it is a part of the district. In our opinion, however, the building does not have the architectural significance or integrity of the other buildings in the district. Also, the house is within a flood area and has sustained water damage at its lower levels. We recommend further discussions with the cultural resource consultants (CCRG), the County Historic Commission, and potentially the State Office of Historic

Preservation, to explore whether this building should be excluded from the potential National Register District.

Preparation for limited public use will require creating a Park Ranger Station and park office as well as parking near the Grey Barn Complex. The Ranger Station and office would best be located at either the Peapack Roadhouse or Oak Cottage. The preferable location is Oak Cottage, as this is a more historic building and part of the Rural Industrial area. Either building can also serve as a residence for park security personnel, prior to full rehabilitation. Each of these buildings is in relatively sound condition, and could be renovated for interim use economically.

The highest priority for rehabilitation and re-use should be given to the buildings that are potentially revenue-generating for the Park, or are a functional part of the Park operations. These buildings would include:

- The Gate House, to be developed as a ranger station;
- Elm Cottage, to be used as an orientation center and rental venue for a nonprofit office and events;
- The Grist Mill, to be used for exhibit and event rental space;
- The Hay Barn, to be used for an equestrian event center, in partnership with a local equestrian organization;
- The Corn Crib, to be used for storage; and
- The Peapack Roadhouse and Oak Cottage, to be used for park staff housing.

Other buildings should be rehabilitated as partners for their development are identified. Eventually the Grey Barn Complex, along with the Incinerator Building, should be rehabilitated and developed into an arts and crafts center, where artists can display and sell their wares. This development should occur with a partner arts organization to share the cost and administer the complex. The Red Barn in the Rural Industrial District should be developed in the same fashion.

Key historic buildings, such as those in the Rural Industrial Historic District area, as well as the Hay Barn, will be restored and compatible uses will be determined that will fit into the overall use of the property. The exact timetable for restoration will depend on the availability of funding and timing of the various grant and aid programs.

**NATIRAR COUNTY PARK MASTER PLAN
BUILDING USE COST ESTIMATE**

Building Number	Building Name	# of Stories / Total Square Footage (sf)	Building Condition	Potential Use	Stabilization Cost	Rehab/Restoration Cost	Comments
1	Elm Cottage	3 with basement at Main, 2 at Rear Addition 5,817 sf	Fair to poor; roof, drainage repairs, requires interior finish upgrade	Offices Orientation Center Rental Event	\$10,000	\$1,200,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanical and electrical upgrades required for business use General interior and exterior refurbishment required.
2	Grist Mill	3 4,036 sf	Poor: requires new roof, gutters, windows, doors	Exhibitions Museum Public Gatherings	\$100,000	\$1,200,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roof and structural repairs required to prevent further damage Adaptive use will require full rehabilitation
3	Corn Crib	1 with loft 868 sf (excludes loft)	Fair: requires new roof, doors, some siding replacement	Storage	\$22,000	\$22,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going maintenance
4	Oak Cottage	2 with basement at Main, 1 at Rear Addition 2,300 sf	Fair: roof repairs, requires interior finish upgrade	Residence for Park Security Personnel	\$5,000 \$20,000*	\$230,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General minor renovations required prior to occupancy
5	Red Frame Barn	2 with attached garage 3,113 sf	Fair: requires new roof, carpentry repairs	Maintenance/Parking Concession Stand (at lower level) Artists' Loft Space (at upper level)	\$40,000	\$78,000 \$100,000 \$207,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited renovation required for concession use Gen'l refurbishment and mech./ elec. upgrades required for artist use
6	Morton Building (West)	1 4,496 sf	Good: modern metal barn construction	Maintenance Equipment	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal renovations required prior to occupancy
7	Morton Building (East)	1	Good: modern metal barn	Maintenance Equipment	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal renovations required prior to

Building Number	Building Name	# of Stories / Total Square Footage (sf)	Building Condition	Potential Use	Stabilization Cost	Rehab/Restoration Cost	Comments
		1,112 sf	construction				occupancy
8	Ash Cottage	2 at Main, 2 with Basement at Rear Addition 2,934 sf	Fair to Poor: river reaches basement level during floods, interior settlement cracks	Residence Fishing Supply Shop	\$3,000	\$450,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General renovations required prior to occupancy for any use This building is not a priority for funding
9	Gate House	3 with Basement at Main, 1 at Rear Addition 2,107 sf	Fair: requires interior finish upgrade, exterior painting	Ranger Station	\$5,000	\$422,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full rehabilitation/restoration prior to occupancy
10	Peapack Road House	1 with Basement 3,282 sf	Fair: requires new roof, shingle replacement, chimney repointing, new drainage	Offices Residence	\$40,000 \$20,000*	\$330,000 \$165,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical upgrades required for business use This building is not a priority for funding
11	Grey Barn Complex Main Barn	2 with loft space above 4,615 sf	Fair: minor drainage repairs	Arts/Crafts Center	\$25,000	\$810,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical and mechanical upgrades and general repairs required prior to occupancy
12	Grey Barn Complex Main Barn Annex	2 at Main, 1 at Connector to Building 11 1,821 sf	Fair: minor drainage repairs	Arts/Crafts Center	\$10,000	\$320,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical and mechanical upgrades and general repairs required prior to occupancy
13	Grey Barn Complex Storage	1 100 sf	Poor: roof repairs, wood floor repl., new foundation	Arts/Crafts Center: Storage	\$2,500	\$12,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural upgrades and general repairs required prior to occupancy
14	Grey Barn Complex	1	Poor: structurally unsound,	Arts/Crafts Center: Storage	\$2,500	\$8,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural upgrades and general repairs

Building Number	Building Name	# of Stories / Total Square Footage (sf)	Building Condition	Potential Use	Stabilization Cost	Rehab/Restoration Cost	Comments
	Storage	84 sf	requires new foundation				required prior to occupancy
15	Grey Barn Complex Storage	1 183 sf	Poor: structurally unsound, requires roof repairs, drainage repairs	Arts/Crafts Center: Storage	\$4,600	\$13,800	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural, envelope, and general repairs required prior to occupancy
16	Grey Barn Complex Storage	1 84 sf	Poor: structurally unsound, requires new foundation	Arts/Crafts Center: Storage	\$2,500	\$8,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural upgrades and general repairs required prior to occupancy
17	Grey Barn Complex Garage	1 1,058 sf	Fair: requires drainage repairs, minor window work, batten replacement	Arts/Crafts Center	\$15,000	\$160,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical, minor structural upgrades and general repairs required prior to occupancy
18	Grey Barn Complex Storage/Office	1 350 sf	Fair: requires drainage repairs, minor window work	Arts/Crafts Center	\$8,800	\$52,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical upgrades and general repairs required prior to occupancy
19	Grey Barn Complex Small Barn at Entrance	1 with Loft 1,830 sf	Fair: minor structural work, minor clapboard replacement, drainage repairs	Arts/Crafts Center	\$23,000	\$275,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical, minor structural upgrades and general repairs required prior to occupancy
20	Grey Barn Complex Storage at Entrance	2 367 sf	Fair: drainage repairs	Arts/Crafts Center	\$9,500	\$55,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical upgrades and general repairs required prior to occupancy
21	Hay Barn	1 2,364 sf	Poor: roof and siding replacement	Storage Equestrian	\$118,500	\$118,500 (additional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical upgrades required for adaptive use Minor exterior repairs required

Building Number	Building Name	# of Stories / Total Square Footage (sf)	Building Condition	Potential Use	Stabilization Cost	Rehab/Restoration Cost	Comments
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional buildings may be required/constructed for equestrian use
22	Incinerator	1 340 sf	Poor: Partial roof collapse, windows and doors deteriorated	Ceramics Studio	\$20,000	\$51,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanical and electrical upgrade required for use as ceramics studio General interior and exterior rehabilitation required

COST TOTALS:

\$477,000

\$5,800,000 (low)

\$6,100,000 (high)

Notes:

1. Costs for both stabilization and rehab/restoration are provided according to Potential Use. If only one price is included where several Uses are listed, it is the same cost for all Uses.
2. Costs exclude site utility work such as electrical/power/phone lines/service to the building, sanitary/sewage/septic systems, waterlines, connections, and hazardous materials inspection and/or abatement.
3. Stabilization costs are for deferred maintenance repairs including roofs, drainage, exterior envelope, etc. and does not include costs for interior spaces. These are costs for making the buildings safe for public access. "*" Refers to costs associated with interim occupancy, allowing the building to be occupied prior to full rehab/restoration, and should be calculated in addition to costs shown for stabilization work.
4. Rehab/Restoration costs are for creating occupiable spaces. It is possible for buildings to be used for storage after stabilization costs.
5. A moderate amount of cyclical maintenance will be required yearly on all buildings, regardless of time frame for rehab/restoration work.
6. All costs exclude escalation, which is 5% per year.

Funding Sources

The development of public parks and historic sites is often funded by public/private partnerships, with direct assistance or by matching grants. There are several Federal, State, and local public assistance programs for historic sites for which certain buildings and portions of the site would be eligible.

A Federal program that should be explored is "SAFTEA", or the "Safe Accountable Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act". Formerly called the T21 Program, it provides grants for Transportation Enhancements under the Transportation Assistance Act. Enhancement grants are available for intermodal transportation projects such as bridal trails, pedestrian paths, bike trails, landscaping improvements, and historic preservation projects, such as railroad station restoration and improvements to areas around railroad and highway right of ways. A spur of New Jersey Transit railroad runs directly through the Natirar site in closed proximity to existing and proposed resources. Several projects could be identified that would be strong candidates for assistance under this program. These grants are competitive; but if the County is successful in securing one, they are direct grants that do not require a match. It is possible, however, to leverage this assistance by using the transportation enhancement grant as a match to one of the state or local programs.

Another Washington, D.C. based program is the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Consultant Services grants program. These grants are typically small grants ranging from \$1,000 - \$10,000 to support professional services for preservation efforts, in such as the preparation of Preservation Plans, Stabilization Studies or Conservation Assessments. These are also direct grants that require a deliverable (report, construction documents, etc.) for reimbursement. Another Federal historic grant program is "Save America's Treasures" begun by the Clinton Administration. However, a strong case would have to be made for national significance of the Natirar resources, and we believe that while the resources are historically important, they may not rise to the level to be fundable under this program.

The major State programs for possible funding are the New Jersey Green Acres program and the New Jersey Historic Trust. Green Acres funding is discussed separately in this report and is mainly used for acquisition of open space and parkland. The Historic Trust program funds the studies, professional architectural/engineering services, and the construction of stabilization, restoration, and adaptive use of historic buildings.

To be eligible for Trust grants, buildings must first be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; and by the conclusion of the project, must be listed on the National Register. Also, to be eligible for Trust funding, a good basis of documentation must be assembled, which in most cases consists of creation of a Preservation Plan for a building or site. A Preservation Plan assembles the basic historical and architectural record of the site, and makes preservation recommendations based on the conditions, code requirements, and building needs. The work accomplished by our team during this contract would assist in the preparation of a Preservation Plan for the Rural Industrial District.

New Jersey Trust Grants are matching grants that are currently given in two categories:

1. Planning Grants, given every year on a 25 to 75% match up to \$50,000.
2. Capital Grants, given every other year on a 50 to 50% match up to \$750,000.

Somerset County also maintains a program of direct grants for historic structures, which is modeled on the New Jersey Historic Trust. We consider this program, along with NJHT, to be a prime source for potential grants for restoration and adaptive use of the historic structures in the Rural Industrial District and for the Gatehouse. While these are matching grants, New Jersey Historic Trust monies can be used as part of the match.

Other potential funding sources might be private, charitable foundations that support projects and programs in line with their mission. The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is a Somerset County based foundation with a strong environmental mission. It is recommended that the County forge a working relationship with Due Farms and explore funding opportunities. Along those lines, many other organizations give grants for conservation or the study of history and preservation. These include: The Dodge Foundation, Morristown, NJ; the Pew Charitable Trust, Philadelphia, PA; and the Warhol Foundation in New York City. The Kress Foundation Of NYC is known to give grants to encourage sustainable design and construction, which is directly relevant to the proposed Natirar Park. We recommend that when

priorities are established for future projects, the Park Commission should explore the range of grants available, either with its own resources or with expert consultants to provide guidance and grant writing support.

Finally, as a public entity, the Park Commission may be ineligible to apply for certain grants or in other ways raise funds for the site. We therefore recommend that the Commission consider forming a 501c3, non-profit entity to advocate for the Park and serve in a fund raising role. There are various examples of "Friends" groups for Parks and historic sites around the State that can serve as models for a Natirar Friends Group. We encourage the Park Commission to explore this idea at its earliest opportunity.

APPENDICES



REFERENCES

Borough of Far Hills

- 2003 *Far Hills Recreation Plan Element*
2004 *Periodic Reexamination Report Prepared for Discussion Purposes*
Zoning Ordinance

Borough of Peapack and Gladstone

- 2002 *Combined Conservation and Recreation Plan Elements of the Peapack and Gladstone Master Plan*
Zoning Ordinance

Kirkham

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