

MILLBROOK COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP RECEIVES \$554,000 COUNTY GRANT
TO HELP CONVERT BENNETT CAMPUS INTO COMMUNITY PARK
Park Expected to Open in Late 2022

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MILLBROOK, New York, February 14, 2022 – The Millbrook Community Partnership (MCP) is pleased to announce that it has received a \$554,000 grant from Dutchess County’s Partnership for Manageable Growth (PMG) towards converting the deteriorated Bennett College campus into a community park.

Demolition of the old campus, located at the southern gateway to the Village of Millbrook, was started in 2021 and is expected to be completed in May of 2022, at which point the 32-acre site will be re-graded and seeded, trails and parking will be constructed, and then the park opened for public access later this year.

“We want to thank County Executive Marc Molinaro and the PMG for this important grant which will enable us to build a green gateway to the Village of Millbrook and create an open space for public enjoyment and recreation,” said Oakleigh Thorne, president of the MCP.

Future phases of the project envision creating a large, open landscaped green space at the corner of Franklin Avenue and New York State Routes 343 and 82, for use as a site for fairs and markets; a bandstand for musical performances; and a memorial to Bennett College, among other enhancements.

The Bennett site is part of a two-pronged, \$21 million initiative by the MCP to revitalize two iconic Millbrook properties that have fallen into considerable disrepair in the last several decades, and convert them into public spaces to enrich the civic and cultural lives of the community — the Bennett Campus and the Thorne Building, a 125-year-old Beaux-Arts school building at the top of Franklin Avenue in the Village of Millbrook.

Details concerning the Bennett Park project can be seen at <https://www.millbrookbennettpark.org/> and details concerning the Thorne Building can be viewed at <https://www.thornebuilding.org>.

Bennett College was opened in 1907 as a two-year women's college and its large Tudor mansion stood as the gateway to Millbrook for 70 years, until 1978 when the college declared bankruptcy and its buildings left to decline.

In 2014, portions of the site were purchased by the Millbrook Tribute Garden and the Thorne family to be used as a community park. The Thorne family and Tribute Garden donated these, and other adjacent properties, to the MCP in 2021 to form the 32-acre facility.

Created in 1999, the Dutchess County PMG program helps protect important agricultural and open space resources. The program provides a locally-funded match for land preservation purchases up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Since its inception, the program has helped to protect 5,313 acres of farmland and open space in Dutchess County, with the protection of an additional 853 acres of farmland pending in five projects. An acquisition of an additional 155 acres of pristine open space is also pending.