

Summary of the sustainable activities and events of 2014 for the Ewing Green Team

2014 Annual Report



Peter J Boughton and Joanne Mullowney

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

EWING GREEN TEAM

JUNE 25, 2015

EWING TOWNSHIP NJ
2 JAKE GARZIO DRIVE
EWING, NJ 08628

MAYOR
Bert Steinmann

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Kevin Baxter
Jennifer Keyes-Maloneyn
David Schroth
Sarah Steward
Kathy Wollert

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY THE 2014 EWING GREEN TEAM

Peter Boughton, Chair; Joanne Mullowney, Communications/IT & Acting Vice Chair; Joseph Mirabella, Membership;

Valorie Caffee; Mary Corrigan; Lisa Feldman; John Hoegl; Mark Wetherbee
Tom Elder, Staff Rep; Jennifer Keyes-Maloneyn, Council Rep; James McManimon, Admin Rep

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ewing Green Team is thankful for continued guidance from our Mayor, as well as support from his staff, especially Business Administrator Jim McManimon and Planner Chuck Latini Jr; Township employees, especially in Parks and Recreation, IT, and the Council, especially our Representative, Jennifer Keyes-Malone. After achieving initial Sustainable Jersey bronze certification in 2013, in 2014, upon earning a grant and hiring two effective facilitators, we expanded collaboration with many in the Township in an 8-month visioning process to help Ewing become progressively more sustainable.

The Community Visioning process was the focus of 2014; from the grant application, to the initial visioning day, to clarifying and amplifying the suggested actions and finalizing them in a strategic plan. Securing the \$10k Sustainable Jersey grant enabled the contracting of a team of visioning professionals.

Collaborations were continued and strengthened with various Ewing Boards and Commissions, the College of New Jersey (Bonners) and neighboring municipalities (Lawrence Living Local Expo, county-wide meetings, and sustainability trainings).

The Ewing Community Gardens Council was activated and a more rigorous spring signup process initiated. The gardeners took a tour of Trenton's community gardens and artworks. Girl Scouts and home-schooled children painted decorative panels surrounding our newly constructed compost bins. A harvest-time luncheon was held. A Boy Scout Eagle project was installation of an informational kiosk and a garden sign. A collaboration with the Arts Commission achieved a first ever judged recycled-materials scarecrow contest with cash prizes.

TRIBUTE

It should be noted that Mary Jane Leach, elected Vice Chair for 2014, resigned due to an impending move to Georgia. She was instrumental in a number of green team actions including the community gardens and gardeners association, in the application for Ewing's Bronze level certification from Sustainable Jersey, and in securing the \$10K grant from Sustainable Jersey for the community visioning process. She left in June after taking an active role in the first community visioning day. She inspired us to reach further.

SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS UNDERWAY DURING 2014

COMMUNITY VISIONING

In the winter of 2014, following Ewing's first Bronze Level Sustainable Jersey certification, the EGT decided that it was important to take stock and plan before moving forward. We wanted to build on Ewing's success and sustainability momentum, increase our capacity as a Green Team, engage more citizens in sustainability activities, and solicit community input to incorporate into our future sustainability planning. With the approval of Mayor Steinmann, we applied for a \$10K Sustainable Jersey grant for a community visioning process. These funds enabled the EGT to hire facilitators Lori Braunstein and Natalie Barney from [Maga Strategies](#) in Cherry Hill, who had the necessary experience to guide us through a community visioning process, pay the expenses involved in running a community visioning event, and then supply some seed monies toward projects that might be identified as a result of this process.



Our goal was to develop a **community vision** for the sustainable future of our town for 5, 10 years down the road and beyond. Our first Visioning day was held on Saturday, June 7th - ***A Community Conversation: Preserving Our Past, Transforming our Future*** with over 50 people attending. Our challenge was to identify Ewing's assets, as well as its challenges, identify overarching quality of life areas of participant interest from the discussions- community values that should be preserved and transformed and then identify tasks for each area that would help to transform our community to the idealized values that residents articulated.

Key Areas of Citizen Interest

Community Branding – developing a common sense of identity, improving the public image of Ewing. People were positive about living in Ewing – wanted to share it

Community Engagement – improving neighborhoods through improved social connections such as strong neighborhood associations.

Waste/Recycling – moving toward lower waste profile thru improved recycling, backyard composting – more education – felt it was doable on a personal level.

Economy – wanted **LOCAL**, vibrant, diversified.

Development – improving transportation → more multi-faceted - improved for biking and walking, train station and airport → assets, liked complete streets approach for town center and wanted more throughout town

Conservation & Preservation – Recreation opportunities, trails, gardens, historic sites

It is important to note here that when you look at the "Key Performance Areas" that came out of the Visioning Day that the focus of the day was not environmental sustainability, but rather the long term sustainability/future of our town. The EGT did not attempt to guide the group for specific results. We did not know what the participants would see as important for the future of Ewing.

Our task in the months following the June 7th visioning day was to clarify and amplify Visioning actions that were agreed upon. The actions sometimes were not all that clear and other suggestions arose as we had more time to discuss each area in several open public forums to which interested citizens were invited back. We rated them, discussed their impact, decided how achievable they were and whether the EGT had the capacity to achieve the action, and factored in potential costs. We added in an Energy action category, which Green Team members had already been working on, a crucial issue that needed to be addressed and was not on June 7th.

Finally, we selected the top three items from each category for action in our Strategic Plan. For a couple of the selections it was felt that much of the work for that action should be done through the municipality or designated committee, however, there were a few actions to which the Green Team could contribute and help add value. A second gathering of all interested parties was held in January 2015 where the contents of the actions were reviewed again and the Strategic Plan was finalized. Results were then presented to the planning board, Council, and Administration.

All remaining actions are included in the final Strategic Sustainability Plan at https://ewinggreenteam.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/strategic_plan_edited_final_with_visioning_summary.pdf. They include actions either best handled by another group designated by Township or are possibilities for the Green Team once the top most actions have been completed.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Outreach to the Ewing community continued via Facebook and Twitter as well as the Green Team website maintained by our Communications/IT officer Joanne Mullowney at <http://ewinggreenteam.org>. In January of 2014 the team sent out its first electronic newsletter using a free service from [Mail Chimp](#). The team also employs [Gmail](#) and has exceeded 600 contacts to keep informed of our offerings. The team also employs the account Google Drive and Calendar functionality for sharing of documents and posting events on the EGT website. We continued electronic event sign ups with [Signup Genius](#).

Reach out at Ewing events included representation at National Night Out at the ESCC on August 5th and Community Fest at TCNJ on October 18th, as well as presentations to the Lions and Kiwanis and the West Trenton Garden Club.

| Ewing Green Team Statistics | | | | |
|--|---------|------|----------|--|
| Categories | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 YTD | |
| Total Facebook likes | 37 | 70 | 103 | |
| Gmail Contacts | unknown | 324 | 626 | |
| Monthly Meeting Attendance | unknown | 167 | 225 | |
| Total Website Views | 349 | 3572 | 5,560 | |
| Website Home Page Posts | 12 | 33 | 33 | |
| Newsletter Openings | | | 1439 | |
| Environmental Insights Series Attendance | NA | NA | 79 | |

ENVIRONMENTAL INSIGHTS

In February 2014 an *Environmental Insights Series* was initiated. This series is meant to start a public conversation in town about critical environmental issues thru lectures, film or discussion groups. Issues discussed included local food, hazardous waste, plastic bag waste, and rain barrel and rain garden creation.

Five programs were run during the year including:

- February 24th - *The History of Environmental Issues and Regulation in New Jersey* presented and moderated by Joe Mirabella at Ewing Library.
- May 2014 - Two separate *Rain Barrel Workshops* with hands-on construction experience for participants were presented by Lindsay Blanton, Americorps Watershed Ambassador for 2014 at Hollowbrook.
- May 27th - *Food Inc.* film and discussion, moderated by Camille Miller, Director of the



FIGURE 1 - SAMPLE FLYER FOR BAG IT IN OCT.

Northeast Organic Farming Association NJ at TCNJ.

- June 10th - A **Rain Garden Workshop** was presented by Lindsay Blanton, Americorps Watershed Ambassador for 2014 at Hollowbrook.
- October 27th - **Bag It** film and discussion, narrated by the County champion of plastic bag reduction, Noemi de la Puente from [NJ Think Outside the Bag](#) at TCNJ.

A total of 79 people attended these various events at the four venues.

E-NEWSLETTER

The team sent out a total of 11 e-newsletters in 2014 to 3651 recipients on a wide array of Green Team events and environmental topics. [Mail Chimp](#) statistics show that 1439 of the emails were opened for an open rate of 39.4%, well exceeding the industry average of 21.4%. Topics ranged from promoting the various **Environmental Insights** programs, the Living Local Expo in March, the **Bag It** film and discussion in October, the Shred Dates and National Take Back Days in town, outreach to the community gardeners and updates on the Community Visioning process. Guest authors included the Chair of the Ewing Environmental Commission and several Bonner students.

The Green Team plans to continue this method of outreach moving forward.



EWING COMMUNITY GARDENS

The Ewing Community Gardens on Whitehead Road Extension were further improved during 2014. Panels were erected and base-coated by Green Team members around several new compost bins, and then painted with colorful images from nature by children from the Girl Scouts and home-schooling families. An Eagle Scout project resulted in an informational kiosk and an identifying sign. Demonstration plots were planted with herbs and flowers by several volunteer gardeners. Administration also provided a Port-a-John for those using both the gardens and adjoining park to recreate during the season.



Spring and fall cleanup days were run at the gardens during the year with gardeners and TCNJ student volunteers. The fall cleanup ended with a picnic featuring gardeners dishes prepared from their produce. A community gardens association met monthly, sometimes at the gardens and sometimes at the ESCC. Resulting by-laws for the association and guidelines for gardeners were provided via the Clerk's office for the 2014 gardening season, which also gathered

contact information and agreement signatures from the gardeners

ISLES TRENTON GARDEN TOUR

EGT member Dave Byers collaborated with Jim Simon from Isles to present the first Isles Garden Tour for the Ewing Community Gardens Association gardeners on a Saturday morning in June. He and Jim Simon, Program Manager of Urban Agriculture of Isles, conducted a tour of about 6 different gardens during the tour. The gardeners were very pleased with the event and it was a great community building event for the gardeners. In addition, Dave noted that he now includes the Ewing Community Gardens on tours that he conducts.



Commission Chair. Continuing collaboration with the neighboring Green Teams was a side benefit. The EGT's Dot Survey was a big hit.

2014 GREEN FAIR

2014 marked the third year of cooperation between the Ewing Green Team, Sustainable Lawrence and the Hopewell Valley Green Team to organize and promote a multi-township Green Fair. Again held in Lawrence Township, but moved to the New Jersey National Guard Armory on Eggerts Crossing Road on March 29th, the fair was a continued success with contributions from Ewing that included the TEMPORaries band, recycled art project for children, and a bird talk by our Environmental

RECYCLED BUTTERFLY ART COLLAGE

Appreciating the important role that art can play in the local economy, 'creative placemaking' recognizes that art brings people together – in a sense of community and as part of our ongoing sustainable efforts. It was a fun project that people enjoyed for getting hands-on experience.

The creative idea of making a butterfly collage was to bring people together and to incorporate recycling. With the guidance of a respected collage artist from Lawrenceville, Ruthann Perry; we created the shape of one of nature's wonders, a butterfly, out of hardware cloth (wire mesh) and

only using recycled items, such as plastic bottle caps, plastic bags cut-up, leftover plastic toys, ribbons, broken costume jewelry, and odds-and-ends from different projects. These were connected to the wire mesh using cut-up pipe cleaners. The end results were (2) colorful butterflies that the three different Green Teams shared for display.

During the Green Fair Ruthann Perry and Lisa Feldman of the Ewing Green Team set the butterflies up with the various recycled items available and had anyone interested stop and participate in the community-shared art project. The most participation was from children; they were excited to add to the butterflies. However, many people seemed to just enjoy the project and the idea of the communities sharing the art.

Lawrence's Nature Center had them on display for a special event. Near the end of the gardening season in time for the recycled scarecrow art contest, the butterflies were attached to the wire fence in front of the Ewing Green Team's Community Garden. They were then loaned to Hopewell's Green Team for their display and finally restored to Ewing's garden fence.

ART

In celebration of the harvest season, Green Team member Lisa Feldman instituted the EGT's first ever ***Build a Scarecrow Contest***, an initiative to promote recycling education with an artsy theme. Contestants had to combine their recycling smarts and creative skills to win cash by making one-of-a-kind scarecrows. Winners were judged on originality, artistry and the creative use of recycled materials. All scarecrows had to be constructed of at least 80% recycled, reclaimed, and/or reused materials.

Lisa also reached out to the Arts Commission for help with judging. Cash prizes and congratulations were awarded from Mayor Steinmann.



ENERGY UPGRADES FOR THE MUNICIPAL COMPLEX

The Township, under the direction of the Mayor, replaced parking lot lights with LEDs, and continued upgrading the interior including new efficient boilers, rebalanced HVAC systems, projection screens and use of electronic drop boxes in lieu of paper for Council, Zoning and Planning meetings. (A plan is being devised to update the Hollowbrook Center incorporating the findings of a Green Team audit.)

ENERGY EFFICIENT BUSINESSES AND RESIDENCES

At the request of the Green Team, the Mayor will issue a letter of support that will be mailed to local businesses by an authorized third party vendor authorized by the BPU, to avail themselves of a 70% defrayment of energy upgrade costs following a free audit under the [Direct Install](#) program. Our Council representative, Jennifer Keyes-Maloney met with the vendor representative, Sandra Torres, outreach director for [Tri-State Light and Energy](#) to verify their credentials.

BIKING AND WALKING

Two pilot bikeability and walkability studies designed by Win Wetherbee were conducted by Bonner students, Ewing Green Team members, and [GMTMA](#) representative Jerry Foster. The first neighborhood was across Green Lane from TCNJ (Brae Burn) and the second was opposite the main entrance to TCNJ across Pennington Road. Reports were provided to relevant Township officials.



COMPLETE STREETS RESOLUTION

Following Green Team encouragement, the Administration authorized a Complete Streets resolution modeled after neighboring communities. With some guidance from GMTMA's Jerry Foster and Ewing Planner Chuck Latini, Jr., Council passed the resolution making Ewing the 12th Mercer community to adopt same.

RECYCLING

Ewing held three Shred Days during 2014 in which the Green Team again participated. Under the leadership of our recycling leader Lisa Feldman, members helped to direct traffic, hand out explanatory flyers and recycling information, answer questions, and give out reusable bags. The number of bags given out provided a good estimate for how many families participated.

The first event on March 22nd had approximately 275 cars. About halfway through the four hour event, the shredding truck filled up and had to leave. Some people chose to wait for its return; some left materials to be shredded with the Ewing Green Team, and some left and returned. The second event went more smoothly, with the Township providing two shredding trucks so there was no need to turn people away. The event count was about 325 cars. The third event on September 27th was extremely successful with an increase to about 400 cars.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing summaries highlight EGT activities during 2014. The Community Visioning process to ***Preserve Our Past, and Transform Our Future***, a collaboration among involved Ewing citizenry, provides us with a blueprint for additional activities in 2015 and subsequent years to advance sustainability in Ewing.