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# Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission asks "What Are Our Community Assets?"

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In difficult economic times people often worry about what they do not have or what they might have to give up. The Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission is taking a different approach by asking what are the community's assets — what are the positive and valued aspects of the community, including places, institutions, programs, and people?

Do you know how many community organizations there are in Berkeley Heights? The Environmental Commission has cataloged 30 civic and religious organizations as part of a Sustainable Jersey project. It has also inventoried parks, recreational facilities, schools, municipal organizations and other organizations of importance to the local economy.

The Community Asset Map — available on the web at [bh-ec.org](http://bh-ec.org) under "other documents" — provides the foundation for assessing gaps and making improvements. According to Sustainable Jersey, asset mapping is a positive (and enjoyable) approach to learning about a community. It begins to answer the question "Where are we now?" and helps community members to think positively about the place in which they live and work.

Not only is the map a valuable reference to those interested in community activities, it can also serve as starting point for discussing "where do we want to be?". "By reflecting back on this starting point," said Leonard Berkowitz, who leads the Sustainable Jersey certification program for Berkeley Heights, "we as a community can identify gaps as well as understand opportunities to expand or create new programs, organizations, activities, and businesses that support a sustainable future."

In addition to developing the Community Asset Map, The Environmental Commission and Sustainability teams are working hard to document the activities Berkeley Heights has completed for silver certification under Sustainable Jersey. The certification program is offered to municipalities in New Jersey that want to go green, save money, and take steps to sustain their quality of life over the long term.

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The Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission was established to protect, develop or use natural resources, including water resources, located within the Township. The Environmental Commission is an advisory group with the responsibility to recommend plans and programs to the Planning Board for the development and use of open lands and wetlands. All the members volunteer their time on a variety of projects and tasks.

Richard Leister, Chairman  
Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission

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