



## Recertification Guidebook for Sustainable Jersey<sup>®</sup> Communities

Updated April 2012

Sustainable Jersey Recertification Guidebook  
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## PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Jersey® is a certification program for municipalities in New Jersey that want to go green, save money, and sustain their quality of life. It **provides tools, training and financial incentives to support and reward communities as they pursue sustainability programs.** The program encompasses the three equal, interrelated components of sustainability:

**Prosperity:** support your local economy and use community resources

**Planet:** practice responsible environmental management and conservation

**People:** embrace social equity and fairness

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### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**Municipal Government Focus:** Only New Jersey municipalities apply for certification. Local governments, as the level of governance closest to citizens, have the highest potential for effecting real change – by raising awareness, informing and mobilizing people to act.

**Free:** No registration fee or certification fees are charged to local governments.

**Voluntary:** Local government participation is strictly voluntary and never mandated.

**Specific Menu of Actions:** The program provides local governments with a clear mission and a menu of sustainable actions to achieve. [Sustainable Jersey Actions](#)

**New Jersey Based and Consensus Driven:** The technical content of the program's actions is developed with the help of 22 task forces that comprise New Jersey state local officials, experts, non-profit groups, and members of the business community. Recommended best practices/actions are vetted with local government officials. The only philosophy we espouse is to look for creative and practical solutions to our most pressing problems, and focus on the long term health of New Jersey and its people.

**Program Training, Workshops and Technical Support:** Training, monthly workshops and technical support is provided to communities in order to build general capacity and effectiveness of local governments and Green Teams for implementing the program.

**Green Teams:** Each registered community is required to have a Green Team. The Green Team is appointed by the municipal governing body and includes representatives from the Environmental Commission, Operations and Maintenance, Planning and Zoning, and other relevant municipal departments, as well as volunteers from the community and key constituencies such as the business community, faith based groups, and school groups.

**Political Affiliation:** The number of republican and democratic led municipalities participating in the program is nearly equal. The program was founded by and supported by Republican and Democratic Gubernatorial administrations, the non-partisan NJ League of Municipalities, and local officials of all political persuasions.

**Property Rights:** The State of New Jersey has delegated planning and zoning powers to local governments to ensure basic public health and safety, and to protect property owners. The Sustainable Jersey program actions provide tools to help each community to

decide its future instead of being buffeted by external forces.

**PARTICIPATING TOWNS** **359 towns are registered and working towards certification.** That is 63% percent of towns from the 566 municipalities in New Jersey. Nearly 75% of New Jersey's population lives in registered/certified Sustainable Jersey communities.

**CERTIFIED TOWNS** **108 municipalities are certified:** 9 towns at the silver level and 99 towns at the bronze level: Asbury Park City, Atlantic Highlands, Bedminster, Belmar, Bethlehem, Berkeley Heights, Bernards, Bernardsville, Bloomfield, Bordentown City, Bridgewater, Buena Vista, Burlington, Cape May, Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, Cherry Hill, Chester, Cranford, Denville, East Brunswick, East Windsor, Edison, Elizabeth City, Englewood City, Fair Lawn, Franklin, Flemington, Galloway, Glen Ridge, Gloucester, Haddon, Haddonfield, Hammonton Town, Hanover, Hawthorne, High Bridge, Highland Park, Hillsborough, Hillsdale, Hoboken, Hopewell, Jersey City, Kearny Town, Lawrence, Leonia, Lincoln Park, Linwood City, Little Silver, Livingston, Long Branch, Lower Alloways Creek, Lower, Madison, Manalapan, Manchester, Maplewood, Marlboro, Middletown, Middle Township, Millburn, Monmouth Beach, Montclair, Montgomery, Morristown Town, Mountain Lakes, Mount Olive, Mullica, North Brunswick, North Plainfield, Nutley, Oakland, Ocean City, Oceanport, Ocean Township (Monmouth County), Old Tappan, Orange, Park Ridge, Parsippany-Troy Hills, Paterson City, Princeton Borough, Princeton Township, Rahway City, Ramsey, Raritan, Readington, River Edge, River Vale, Rutherford, Saddle River, South Orange Village, Shrewsbury, Sparta, Summit City, Teaneck, Tenafly, Union Township (Hunterdon County), Union Township (Union County), Upper Saddle River, Warren, Washington Township, West Amwell, West Milford, West Windsor, Westwood, Woodbine, Woodbridge and Wyckoff.

**SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM** Sustainable Jersey provides funding to local governments for sustainability projects that is raised from private sources such as PSEG and Walmart. To date, \$595,000 has been awarded through the 2009-2011 Sustainable Jersey Small Grants program. Eighty grants have been given to New Jersey municipalities, representing 20 counties, for sustainability projects to make communities more livable, environmentally friendly and prosperous.

**HISTORY** The Sustainable Jersey certification program was launched in February 2009. Sustainable Jersey began as a collaborative effort between the New Jersey State League of Municipalities and The College of New Jersey, in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities. In Winter 2011/2012, Sustainable Jersey evolved from a partnership into a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a Board of Directors.

**PROGRAM AWARDS & HONORS** 2011 U.S. EPA Environmental Quality Award  
2010 National Ashoka/Community Matters Changemakers Strong Communities Award  
2010 NJ Joint Legislative Resolution from the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly

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## **2012 PROGRAM**

### **Program Changes Since 2009**

In 2010, Sustainable Jersey added an additional level of certification, creating a Bronze Level and a Silver Level. Bronze certification still only requires completion of two (2) Priority Actions, while Silver requires three. Additional Priority Actions have been added, while some have been removed. For more information on this please, review the Certification FAQs below or visit the [actions' page](#) on the website.

Additionally, we have added many new actions and have expanded options for receiving points in multiple categories. For example, in 2009, if you had five amazing recycling advancements, you could only receive credit for two; however, we now have more options for receiving credit under the Recycling Actions.

We also adjusted the point system to keep the level of effort required to achieve certification similar to the first year of the program. Since it is now easier to score points, and there are more points available, we have adjusted the minimum points for the Bronze (or first level of certification) to 150 points. Finally, we added a new level of certification, Sustainable Jersey

Silver, which requires 3 priority actions, 350 points, and actions completed in at least 8 categories.

## **2012 Program Updates**

There are minimal differences between 2011 and 2012 overall. The general program requirements remain the same (points, priority actions, etc.).

Below is a **list of actions that have undergone significant changes for 2012**. A modest number of the current actions will have significant changes that are different enough that the 2011 version might no longer earn points. If you are applying for points for one of these actions, please review the updated action thoroughly before initiating your project or finalizing your documentation. Actions undergoing minor changes are listed as well.

All the action updates were posted to the website by March 1, 2012. The [actions' page](#) and each action will note which actions have been updated.

## **2012 Certification Deadlines**

For the 2012 program year, there will be three deadlines by which municipalities seeking certification will be reviewed. These deadlines are May 31, 2012, August 8, 2012, and January 4, 2013. All applications must be submitted by midnight. Note: Our offices will be closed from December 24<sup>th</sup> to January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Of course, municipalities may apply after January 4; however, all applications received after January 4, 2013 will be considered part of the 2013 certification year and will be subject to any program rule changes for that year.

For all updates and information on the upcoming certification cycle as well as information on the Sustainable Jersey actions please visit: <http://sustainablejersey.com/actionlist.php>

## **2012 Action Changes**

**NOTE: The Energy Audit For One Building action will still be available for points, but *will no longer be a Priority Action for 2012 and beyond* (2011 was the grandfather year).**

### **Actions with Significant Changes:**

- **Create Green Team**
- **Energy Education and Outreach**
- **Green Building Scorecard** (being replaced with a new tool called "Creating a Green Development Checklist" - making it an easier entry point with much more guidance)
- **Anti-Idling Education & Enforcement**
- **Natural Resource Inventory**
- **Environmental Assessment Ordinance**
- **Innovative Demonstration Project- Other 1 & 2**

**Actions that will have Significant Changes announced during 2012 and effective in 2013:**

- **The Site Plan Green Design Standards action** (the 2011 standards are grandfathered for the 2012 program year. In 2013 this action will be thoroughly updated, with improved guidance. It will also be a more clearly described next step after the “Creating a Green Development Checklist” action.)
- **Inventory and Audit All Buildings** (The 2011 standards are grandfathered for the 2012 program year. Expect revised action mid-year to use as guidance for 2013 and beyond.)

**Actions with Minor Changes:**

- **School Based Energy Conservation Programs** (adding more options)
- **Energy Star Portfolio Manager** (adding more software options) and changing name to **ENERGY BENCHMARKING AND MANAGEMENT**
- **Climate Action Plan**
- **Safe Routes to School**
- **Complete Streets Program**
- **Open Space Plans**
- **Clustering Ordinance** (providing more options)
- **Green Roofs** (time limits)
- **Rain Garden** (time limits)
- **Wind Energy** (time limits)
- **Geothermal Energy** (time limits)
- **Green Roofs** (time limits)
- **Rain Garden** (time limits)
- **Companion Animal Management Plan** (making pledge a separate action)
- **Recycling Depot**
- **Grass - Cut It & Leave It Program**
- **Backyard Composting Program**
- **Materials Reuse Program**
- **Waste Audit - Muni Building or Schools**

**Actions Being Removed (These actions were grandfathered for the 2011 Program Year, but are no longer available in 2012 and have been removed):**

- **Organize a Community Energy Outreach Program**
- **Efficient Home Heating and Cooling Subsidies**
- **Home Energy Audits and Upgrades**
- **Energy Star Appliances and Products**
- **Refrigerator/Freezer Recycling**

## **CERTIFICATION FAQs**

***What does becoming certified mean?*** Sustainable Jersey Bronze means that a municipality has made a commitment to sustainability and has succeeded in implementing significant first steps. Sustainable Jersey Silver means that a municipality has made significant progress in a number of categories toward sustainability and is a statewide and national leader.

***For how long is the certification valid?*** Sustainable Jersey certification is good for three (3) years from the date of certification. At the end of the third year, the town will no longer be considered certified. This means that when a community is certified they do not need to recertify before then. However, municipalities are allowed to recertify each program year if they choose to do so.

### ***Why become certified?***

- **Save money. Get money.** We help you implement practices that lead to cost savings in energy, water and garbage bills. The program helps communities improve efficiency, cut waste, and stimulate their local economy. You get special priority access and notification of incentives and grants and are eligible for the Sustainable Jersey Small Grant Program which has funded \$595,000 worth of sustainable projects across New Jersey.
- **Gain access to training, tools, and expert guidance.** Regular training workshops, webinars, and leadership meetings provide your town with connections to your peers in other certified towns and to the leading experts in municipal sustainability issues.
- **Get recognized. Promote your town.** Sustainable Jersey towns are promoted on our website, Facebook, Twitter, in our publications, in the media, and at promotional events including the annual Sustainable Jersey Awards' Luncheon at the New Jersey League of Municipalities' conference.
- **Conserve valuable resources. Protect the environment.** Residents increasingly want to live in towns that are doing their part for the environment. Sustainable Jersey certified towns align with their community's values while saving both natural and municipal resources.

***What are the requirements for the levels of certification?*** Sustainable Jersey currently offers Bronze and Silver certification levels. The **Bronze** Level of certification requires the establishment of a mandatory Green Team, implementation of 2 out of 7 PRIORITY ACTIONS, and a total of 150 points. Actions must be completed in 6 of the 16 categories to be eligible for certification. The **Silver** Level of Certification requires the establishment of a mandatory Green Team, implementation of 3 out of 7 PRIORITY ACTIONS, and a total of 350 points. Actions must be completed in 8 of the 16 categories to be eligible for certification.

### ***What are the program actions that municipalities must achieve in order to be certified?***

Actions are the concrete steps municipalities can take to become more green and sustainable. Currently, the program has identified over one hundred actions that you can choose from to reach the minimum points required for certification. Actions include ordinances, programs, policies and procedures, and facility improvements. Each action comes with detailed resources and step by step "how to" directions.

***How do you become certified?*** After registering, your municipality must achieve at least 150 points from your completed actions for the Bronze level or at least 350 points for the Silver level.

Every community must create a Green Team and select at least two (for Bronze level) or three (for Silver level) of the seven priority actions: 1) ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, (renamed as Energy Benchmarking and Management), 2) Energy Audits for All Municipal Buildings, 3) a Municipal Carbon Footprint, 4) a Sustainable Land Use Pledge, 5) a Natural Resource Inventory, 6) a Water Conservation Ordinance, and/or 7) a Fleet Inventory. All actions taken by municipalities to score points toward certification must be accompanied by documentary evidence and will be reviewed by the project partners. Only efforts that meet the standards described in the actions will be accepted and counted toward certification.

***How often can I submit an application for certification?*** Municipalities may submit an application for certification up to three times (each review period) a year. However, once certified in a program year, municipalities are no longer eligible to apply for certification in the same program year and must wait until the following program year to apply for certification again

## **RECERTIFICATION AND REAPPLYING**

### **Overview**

Certification is good for three (3) years. This means that any municipality certified in the program will retain that status until the third (3) anniversary of their most recent certification, at which point they will no longer be considered certified.

To become “recertified” communities must submit an application for certification that details what program actions they have undertaken to become more sustainable. Some actions that a community has previously completed will still be valid, and will not require new documentation. Many other actions will require evidence of recent activity or conformance with new standards to meet the current requirements of the actions currently in the program. However, when applying for recertification you should look at the list of actions with fresh eyes and note where the actions have changed. Communities seeking recertification may apply at either level, Bronze or Silver, no matter at what level they were previously certified.

Communities that had previously applied for certification but were rejected often have similar questions and concerns as previously certified towns and should also review the section below.

### **Guidelines for Recertifying/Reapplying**

Communities previously certified or those who have applied for certification before but did not receive certification and are considering applying again for either recertification or their first certification will find this section invaluable. While there is no separate application or specific process when recertifying or reapplying, there are some tips and guidelines that should be followed.

**NOTE:** For reasons of simplification, we will refer to recertifying/reapplying as reapplying unless otherwise noted.

Although it is likely that will receive points for most of the actions you completed in the past, when reapplying you should approach it as if you were applying for the first time. By this, we mean you should assume you have no points and should review the submission requirements

for each action you plan to submit in your application. Though your municipality may have been certified in 2010 with 150 points, this is not a static number for a variety of reasons.

For one, many actions have a limited “shelf-life” and documentation for that action can expire. For instance, if your documentation for the Green Fair is over 1 year old, it needs to be replaced with documentation for a Green Fair that took place in the 12 months prior to your full application submission.

Furthermore, the standards and submission requirements for a small number of actions change from year to year based on feedback received, new knowledge or best practices in particular fields, and changes in partner programs. In this case, activities completed under our previous standards may no longer receive points under the revised standards. We classify these as major changes mentioned in the “2012 Program Updates” section. We make our best effort to stay on top of these ever-changing practices and to notify towns in advance of expected action changes so they can adjust their activities appropriately. In some instances, we will grant points to actions that meet previous standards for a given time or grandfather them entirely.

Finally, we occasionally remove actions from our program or change the point value of actions for various reasons. Because of these program changes, some communities may actually “lose” points for actions that were previously approved. We work hard to limit these instances.

For the reasons mentioned above, communities reapplying should pay close attention to the submission requirements for each action they are submitting to make sure their documentation is both current and meets the standards listed under the “Submission Requirements” section.

### **Recommended Plan for Reapplying:**

What we recommend is to start at the top of the action list, and for each action you have, check the "submission requirements" section of that action. Each will say how recent the action needs to be. We also have the [Master Action Tracking Spreadsheet](#) that has a column for Resubmission guidelines. These guidelines outline what type of update is needed for that action when reapplying.

Some actions will need to be updated in order to earn points, some will need to be replaced, and some will not need any updating.

For instance:

Some actions need to be slightly updated to show that the action has been kept up over the 12 months prior to your new application (Create a Green Team, Recycling Depot, Environmental Commission, etc.). For the EC, you would upload the most recent Annual Report (replacing the previous one). For the Green Team, you would need to update the list of members IF that has changed. You would also briefly update the description of recent activities.

Some projects are ongoing by nature, and require that you get confirmation annually, such as the Community Forestry Plan and Tree Cover Goal. For this action you would keep your approved Tree Cover Goal resolution in the upload box but you would need to submit your current "Approved Status Letter" that you receive from NJDEP Community Forestry program for

the most recent year. If your community is NOT in approved status during the 12 months prior to the submission deadline, you will not be able to receive points for this action.

An example of an action that would need to be completely updated is the Green Fair. The Green Fair is intended to be an annual event, and needs to have taken place within the 12 months prior to your submission. A two year old Green Fair will not get you any points.

An NRI (or ERI) needs to have been completed or updated within the past six years (prior to your most recent application for certification). If it is still within that timeframe, it is still good. A solar demonstration project will be good indefinitely. If you received points for a solar demonstration project in Bronze, you can submit it again and get points for it in Silver.

In any case, you would go through your chosen actions, one by one, and check them against the submission requirements to see what kind of documentation might need to be added, or if the old documentation just needs to be replaced, or if the old documentation is just fine the way it is.

## **Recertification FAQs**

***At what level were communities certified at in the inaugural year of 2009?*** Communities that received Sustainable Jersey certification in 2009 are certified at the Bronze level. Certified communities can now apply for Silver certification if they fulfill the requirements detailed on the website, and uncertified communities can apply for either Bronze or Silver.

***Do actions change or expire?*** A modest number of the actions from year to year will have significant changes. Significant changes are defined as having changes to implementation or submission requirements that are different enough that the previous version of the action would no longer earn points. Any action revision that may make an action that was approved in the previous year not eligible for points after the revision is considered a significant change (e.g. Action previously required only one outreach event but after revision requires two outreach events).

***Are there maintenance requirements for our certification?*** While there are no “maintenance” requirements for our certification, the certification is only valid for three (3) years and one of the goals of the program is to promote and foster ongoing efforts towards sustainability. This ongoing nature is often indirectly reflected in the submission requirements of many actions. Thus, it is in the best interest of communities wishing to advance sustainability and achieve certification in our program to “maintain” their efforts towards sustainability year in and year out.

***Since the certification is good for three years, do we need to recertify before then?*** Certification in our program is good for three (3) years from the date of certification. At the end of the third year, the town will no longer be considered certified. Certified communities do not need to recertify before the third anniversary of their certification. However, municipalities are allowed to recertify each program year if they choose to do so and some towns do, either at the bronze or silver level.

***What do municipalities have to do to maintain Bronze?*** Communities must reapply for certification before the third anniversary of their most recent certification date and meet the

current standards for the Bronze Level of certification. The Bronze Level of certification requires the establishment of a mandatory Green Team, implementation of 2 out of 7 PRIORITY ACTIONS, and a total of 150 points. Actions must be completed in 6 of the 16 categories to be eligible for certification.

***If we are certified at the Bronze Level, do we have to achieve Silver status within 3 years?***

No, you are not required to move up to Silver. The time limit of 3 years refers to how long any level of certification is good.. Communities may recertify at either the Bronze Level or the Silver Level.

***My community was certified with 175 points. Do we still have all 175 points?***

No, you can not assume that previous points which were applied toward certification are still valid. While you were certified with 175 points, that number is not static. The reason for this is that some actions and the documentation that you have submitted in the past may no longer be eligible for points. This may be because: (a) most actions have a limited shelf-life and documentation needs to be updated or replaced (b) action,s requirements and standards have changed since you last submitted your action or (c) some actions are occasionally removed from the program and are no longer eligible for points. When your community applies for recertification, reviewers will verify that all of your actions are up-to date and meet the current submission requirements for that action. If any previously approved actions no longer meet the submission requirements, your community will “lose” the points associated with that action.

***Are my actions from previous years still good?*** It depends. Actions taken by municipalities that already have been completed can count toward your certification total as long as they still meet the requirements of that action. Most of the actions are time-sensitive and the submission requirements for each action specify how recently an action must have been completed in order to qualify for points. Also, the requirements for some actions may change from year to year and past actions may no longer qualify. Be sure to review the requirements for each past action you plan to submit for certification and your documentation to make sure your action is still eligible for points.

***Will I need to resubmit materials for items we'd gotten points for in the past?*** All of the documentation you have submitted to us in the past remains in your profile unless you remove it or replace it and you will not need to upload the same documentation again. However, some actions and the documentation that you have submitted in the past may no longer be eligible for points since most actions have a limited shelf-life and documentation needs to be updated or replaced.

***Can we use points earned in our Bronze Level Certification towards our Silver Level Certification?*** Points earned in the program can be applied to Bronze or Silver certification. Remember, however, the documentation for those points must be up-to-date and meet the standards of the action’s submission requirements. Some actions that received points previously may need to be updated or replaced because action documentation may expire or no longer be valid.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to email [info@sustainablejersey.com](mailto:info@sustainablejersey.com) or call 609-771-2938.