

2025 NEW JERSEY SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT

SUSTAINABILITY SESSIONS: 10:00 – 11:10am

ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL SJ, SJS

Food insecurity is an ongoing issue that affects nearly one million New Jerseyans. This session will explore ways in which municipalities and schools are stepping up to tackle food insecurity by implementing share tables in schools, operating food pantries and supplemental feeding programs, and making farmers markets more accessible. Municipal and school leaders will share best practices and lessons learned from real-world food access initiatives across the state.

Kelly Ammiano, Teacher, Menlo Park Terrace School #19, Woodbridge; **Lauren Skowronski**, Assistant Director, Sustainable Jersey; **Rosemarie Suarez**, Sustainability Coordinator, Town of West New York

[CEUs available: CRP, 1.0 Classroom; CMFO/CCFO, 1.0 Office Management and Ancillary Subjects; CTC, 1.0 General/Secondary; CPWM, 1.0 Management; RMC, 1.0 Professional Development; QPA, 1.0 Office Admin./General Duties]

EXPANDING RECYCLING: INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS AND WASTE REDUCTION STRATEGIES SJ, SJS

With traditional recycling markets facing ongoing challenges, valuable resources continue to be lost to landfills due to the absence of mandated recycling requirements. This session will showcase innovative municipal and school recycling programs that are successfully diverting materials from the waste stream. Additionally, it will explore practical and effective waste reduction strategies that can be implemented to maximize resource recovery. Attendees will gain insights into creative solutions and community-driven initiatives that are making a measurable impact in advancing sustainability.

Speakers to be announced

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LEAD THE CHARGE ON COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION! SJ

In this session, speakers will showcase the various pathways that municipalities can take when thinking about taking the charge in transforming community transportation. Exploring e-mobility options, enhancing last-mile travel solutions, and fostering sustainable transportation practices; attendees will gain valuable ideas on building more connected, inclusive, and sustainable transportation systems, paving the way for cleaner, greener communities.

Cathleen Lewis, E-Mobility Program Manager, Division of Clean Energy, NJ Board of Public Utilities; **Laura Fenster Rothschild**, Managing Director, Johnson Center for Learning & Impact; **Peg Hanna**, Director, DEP Climate Change Mitigation and Monitoring; Additional speakers TBA

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UPDATES FROM STATE AGENCIES SJ, SJS

New Jersey State Agency leaders will share their latest sustainability initiatives that impact municipalities and schools. Attendees will hear directly from decision-makers about emerging and ongoing approaches that state agencies are taking to promote sustainability, reduce our carbon footprint, conserve natural resources, and advance social equity. Panelists will discuss key programs, initiatives, and resources they have developed and implemented. Ask questions and gain valuable insights into the programs and resources available to support your sustainability efforts.

Dan Fatton, Director, Clean Energy Partnerships, New Jersey Economic Development Authority; **Jorden Schiff**, Ed.D, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Teaching and Learning Services, New Jersey Department of Education; Additional speakers TBA

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SUSTAINABILITY SESSIONS: 11:30 – 12:30pm

ENERGY PROJECTS FOR YOUR BUILDINGS AND FLEETS SJ, SJS

Join us to explore energy projects for schools and municipalities that can help save money and reduce emissions. Learn how to leverage state, utility, and federal funding to maximize project savings. This session will cover key incentive programs, including building electrification, new construction, and fleet electrification funding. Additionally, get an overview of the Sustainable Jersey online Purchasing Center.

John Blair, Energy Specialist, Jackson Township School District; **Rachel Ehrlich**, Councilperson, Madison Borough; **Theo Banks**, Clean Energy Champion, New Jersey Clean Energy Program/TRC

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HOPE FUELS OUR FUTURE: CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES IN TURBULENT TIMES SJS

Hope and imagination are powerful drivers of change. This session will examine how Hope Theory can be used to inspire learning and community engagement for a just climate future. Participants will discuss strategies for fostering optimism, resilience, and collective action in the face of environmental challenges.

Sarah Sterling-Laldee, Senior Advisor on Climate Change Education, New Jersey Department of Education

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CONNECTING STATE LEGISLATION AND LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT SJ

Action at the state level is one of many spokes on the sustainability wheel. Key Legislators will share updates on related issues moving through the Legislature, some of which will advance your own local projects.

New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin, Legislative District 19; **Senator Bob Smith**, Legislative District 17; Additional speakers TBA

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SUSTAINABLE JERSEY BOOTCAMP SJ, SJS

Are you new to the Sustainable Jersey program? Is your community applying for a Sustainable Jersey grant for the first time? Is your green team revitalizing after a few years off? If the answer is yes to any of those questions, please join Sustainable Jersey and Sustainable Jersey for Schools staff for this session to learn about strategies, tips, and resources to help you make the most of what the program has to offer. There will be ample time to answer questions and opportunities for participants to share their experiences. Together, we will help you get your green team in shape for future certification and grant applications!

JoAnna Contarino, Program Coordinator, Sustainable Jersey; **Maureen Jones**, Program Coordinator, Sustainable Jersey; **Kaitlyn Vollmer**, Grants Program Manager, Sustainable Jersey

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SUSTAINABILITY SESSIONS: 1:45 – 2:45pm

AMPLIFYING YOUR IMPACT: MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR GREEN TEAMS SJ, SJS

This session is designed to help green teams elevate their community presence. Hear from those who have successfully leveraged social media, engaging videos, and compelling content to amplify their efforts. Whether you're looking to attract volunteers, raise awareness for a cause, or grow your audience, this session will provide practical tips and creative strategies to boost your green team's visibility.

Elana Berk, Communications & Outreach Manager, Sustainable Princeton; Additional speakers TBA

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BEYOND CITY HALL: ENERGY ACTIONS TO TRANSFORM YOUR COMMUNITY SJ

Join us for actionable insights and fresh ideas to help your town lead the way in energy transformation. This session will feature new incentives from New Jersey's utilities to help municipalities support energy-reducing measures in the residential and business communities. Overviews of new programs including NJBPU's Community Solar Auto-Enrollment Program, and NJEDA's Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program will be featured.

Jessica Hood, Program Support Manager, Energy Efficiency Growth & Strategy, PSEG; **Ila Vassallo**, Coach, NJ Electrification Coaching Network; Senior Project Officer of Clean Energy, New Jersey Economic Development Authority; Additional speakers TBA

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IS YOUR COMMUNITY CLIMATE READY? INTRODUCING THE NEW GOLD STAR! SJ

Take climate adaptation to the next level with the Gold Star in Climate Readiness. This new gold star standard gives municipalities the freedom to choose impactful actions while embracing a holistic approach to tackling climate change head-on. The impacts of climate change necessitate a forward-looking, comprehensive approach across municipal efforts. The suite of certification actions contributing to the Gold Star in Climate Readiness span the Built, Natural, Social, Economic, and Governance Systems that support the municipality. This session will introduce the new gold star standard and provide examples of climate adaptation actions happening in communities around the state.

Christopher Obropta, Extension Specialist, Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program; **Jaclyn Rhodes**, Director of Conservation Policy, Pinelands Preservation Alliance; **Tanya Rohrbach**, Program Manager for Policy and Planning, Sustainable Jersey

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SITE PLAN REVIEWS: A KEY TOOL FOR PROTECTING YOUR COMMUNITY'S ENVIRONMENT SJ

When new developments or redevelopments are proposed in your community, how can you ensure that environmental concerns—such as stormwater management, tree preservation, and climate resilience—are properly addressed? This session will demystify the site plan review process and highlight its critical role in safeguarding local environmental health. The session will provide an overview of how site plan reviews work, key environmental factors to watch for, and practical ways you can get involved to advocate for sustainable, climate-conscious development.

Speakers to be announced

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TREE TALK! PLANTING, MAINTAINING AND FUNDING: DROP-IN COACHING SESSION SJ, SJS

Is your school district or municipality looking for resources to support enhancing and maintaining your community tree canopy? Perhaps your district or school is applying for a Trees for Schools planting grant and/or the new Tree-Planting action? Or your municipality might be in the throes of updating its Community Forestry Management Plan or Tree Protection Ordinance. Drop-in to talk trees and get your questions answered!

Melanie McDermott, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Sustainable Jersey

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SUSTAINABILITY SESSIONS: 3:00 – 4:00pm

MAKE COMPLETE AND GREEN STREETS WORK FOR YOU SJ, SJS

We know Complete and Green Streets as a policy framework and approach sets the stage for safer, healthier and more equitable walking, biking and rolling in New Jersey. Hear about the resources New Jersey communities are using to advance Complete and Green Streets and earn Sustainable Jersey points. Learn how Safe Systems, Vision Zero, Safe Routes and other emerging trends fit with and complement Complete and Green Streets.

Speakers to be announced

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NAVIGATING SUSTAINABILITY HEADWINDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SJ, SJS

Discover how to talk about sustainable solutions with people across the political spectrum, tackle misinformation, and share compelling stories about why sustainability matters to your community.

Dr. Emily Schoerning, Founder & CEO, American Resiliency; Additional speakers TBA

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STRENGTHENING LOCAL ECONOMIES THROUGH SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES SJ

Municipalities play a vital role in fostering strong local economies while advancing sustainability. Across New Jersey, businesses are voluntarily adopting sustainable practices—reducing energy use, minimizing waste, sourcing greener materials, and supporting their communities. A Green Business Recognition Program provides public acknowledgment for companies leading the way, while also inspiring further action. In this session, hear from municipalities that have successfully launched programs to support local businesses in adopting sustainable practices, including initiatives linked to the NJ Sustainable Business Registry Program. Learn how these efforts not only benefit the environment but also drive long-term economic competitiveness and resilience.

Robin Heston-Murphy, Supervisor, Sustainability Innovation Program, DEP; Additional speakers TBA

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STOP THE TOSS: PREVENTING LITTER IN OUR COMMUNITIES SJ, SJS

Litter remains a persistent environmental and community challenge, but education and compliance efforts can help change behaviors and create cleaner, healthier spaces. This session will discuss the new Sustainable Jersey Litter Prevention Education & Compliance action, explore effective litter prevention strategies and compliance measures, resources, and community engagement initiatives that encourage responsible waste disposal.

Samantha McGraw, Sr. Department Administrator, Sustainable Jersey; Additional speakers TBA

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HELP YOUR RESIDENTS SAVE ENERGY AND MONEY: DROP-IN COACHING SESSION SJ, SJS

Drop in to learn about the amazing resources and staff support available in the SJ-PSE&G Energy Efficiency Partnership Program. Hear how communities across the state are making use of this valuable program. *Eligible municipalities are served by PSE&G for electricity and gas.

Jane Schneider, Energy Program Consultant, Sustainable Jersey; Leanne McGowan, Energy Program Manager, Sustainable Jersey

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SJS = session has schools related content | SJ = content relates to municipal certification program

*Additional CEUs: NJACCHO has approved 5 public health CE credits for attendance of the entire event