

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

March 2020



David Kois, PP, AICP

Business Advocate/Sustainability Director
Hillsborough Township (Somerset County)

Although David Kois wears many hats—Business Advocate, Sustainability Director, Deputy Zoning Official, husband and as of last month, father—his guiding focus is to incorporate sustainability into his life and his work in Hillsborough Township. As Sustainability Director for Hillsborough Township, David plans and delivers extraordinary projects with his colleagues and the volunteers from the Sustainable Hillsborough Steering Committee.

[Hillsborough Township](#) has been certified with Sustainable Jersey since 2009 and has maintained certification at the silver-level since 2011. A rising star, David’s passion and hard work inspires those around him. He has had a meaningful impact in the expansion of sustainable initiatives throughout the community. In total, Hillsborough Township has been re-certified eight times in ten years, leading all towns in Somerset County. Hillsborough is the second most certified town in all of New Jersey since the Sustainable Jersey certification program began in 2009.

David creatively describes his entry into sustainability as the superhero, The Incredible Hulk, taking over Dr. Bruce Banner’s body. After David was assigned to oversee the Sustainable Jersey certification for Hillsborough, his world changed to green. He went from knowing very little about the topic to quickly being consumed by all things sustainable.

David’s ability to listen and connect with others has helped him excel in Hillsborough, especially in the area of sustainability. He said, “The approach I take when promoting sustainability comes from my experience in the areas of planning, zoning and economic development. It is important to listen and find the middle ground in order to open minds to new possibilities.” He enjoys the challenge of building consensus in order to solve complex issues.

“The thing I’m most proud of is something that you cannot see. After over ten years of working on sustainability actions, we’ve incorporated sustainability into the goals and objectives of each municipal department and employee work plan,” said David. “I no longer have to ask my co-workers to find a sustainable solution; now they are coming to me with creative ideas to incorporate sustainability into their work. Our employees have taken ownership of the sustainability program, resulting in cost savings at the municipal level and an overall healthier and better community.”



Sustainable Jersey Silver-Certified: The Hillsborough Township Committee established the [Sustainable Hillsborough](#) Steering Committee in 2007 to provide guidance on green and sustainability-related issues. David works closely with the Sustainable Hillsborough volunteer members including the chair, Chris Obropta, Ph.D., PE. He also has great appreciation for the support he gets from Hillsborough Mayor Doug Tomson, Administrator Anthony Ferrera and the Township Committee members who rely on him to achieve certification each year.

Some of the actions that Hillsborough Township completed for certification include: development of the [Sustainable Hillsborough Strategic Plan](#), a Buy Local campaign, a municipal complex rain garden, emergency communications planning, a green living and wellness fair, recycled paper purchasing, a municipal on-site solar system, a wildlife interaction plan, smoke-free parks and a tree protection ordinance. To review all of their accomplishments, read the [2019 Hillsborough Township Certification Report](#). David's goal for the future is to achieve a [Sustainable Jersey Gold Star in Energy](#) and he is working with the Somerset County Sustainability Hub to plan a county-wide Green Business Recognition Program.



Promotion of Local Farms: In Hillsborough, residents and visitors have a single source to find local farm stands, farmers market, community supported agricultural and the mayor's wellness program. [Hillsborough Harvest](#) promotes the value of Hillsborough Farms and local products. David created the program with help from the Hillsborough Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Hillsborough Economic and Business Development Commission. David explained, "Hillsborough has a vibrant farming community and the town takes great pride in its rural history and scenic landscape. It's important to promote the farming community like we do with the other local businesses through the Experience Hillsborough website. Farmers are great role models for sustainable living and Hillsborough Harvest is an important program." Participating farms are featured on the Hillsborough Harvest page where they advertise local products and events for free.



Water Conservation Pledge: Hillsborough Township participated in the annual [Wyland National Mayor's Challenge for Water Conservation](#) which is a competition between cities across the United States to see who can be the most water-wise. Mayors challenge their residents to conserve water, energy and natural resources on behalf of their city through a series of pledges online. Hillsborough Township entered the competition for the first time in 2019 and finished 31st out of 550+ towns and cities across the country, and first in New Jersey in the 30,000 to 99,999 population category. More than 2,000 pledges from residents were submitted to save over 8.5 million gallons of water. David said, "This campaign helped to jumpstart our outreach to the community and created new interest in sustainability. We're thrilled with the result and plan to kick-off a new campaign in April 2020." Hillsborough Township created a [Water Conservation Guide](#) for residents to help them meet their pledged goals.

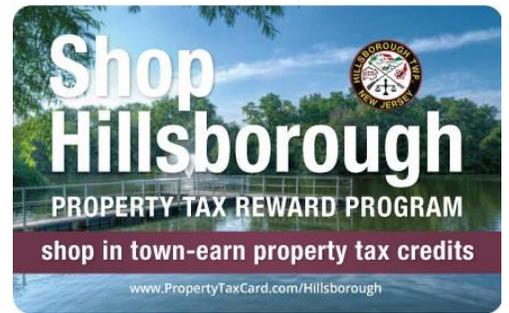


Sustainable Transportation and Commuting Alternatives: New Jersey Smart Workplaces, a program of New Jersey's Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), recognizes employers that promote sustainable transportation, commuting alternatives, safety and workplace wellness for their employees. [RideWise](#), a TMA based in Somerset County, honored Hillsborough Township with platinum status in the New Jersey Smart Workplace Program. David serves on the RideWise Board of Directors and has been instrumental in promoting sustainable transportation options for township employees. In 2013, Hillsborough Township received the silver award and became the first Somerset County municipality to achieve platinum in the New Jersey Smart Workplaces program. The township was recognized for the Hillsborough Park and Ride at the Hillsborough Promenade, which features an express bus to New York City by Suburban Transit. Hillsborough provides alternative commuting information in new hire packets and has a designated bike area for employees. Being a New Jersey Smart Workplace also earned Hillsborough Township Sustainable Jersey certification points through the [Smart Workplaces](#) action.

Commercial Energy Efficiency Outreach: [New Jersey's Clean Energy Program \(NJCEP\)'s Direct Install](#) incentives help small businesses by covering up to 70 percent of the cost of making their buildings more energy-efficient. Hillsborough

Township completed the Sustainable Jersey action [Commercial Energy Efficiency Outreach](#) by actively promoting the Direct Install program to its local businesses. Outreach included announcing the program at the televised township committee meeting, mailing a targeted letter and sending e-mails to Hillsborough Business Association's 2,500 contacts and the township's 5,000 contacts. The Hillsborough Business Association followed up the mailing with a separate communication reinforcing the benefits of Direct Install.

Buy-Local Reward Program: [Shop Hillsborough](#) is a reward program that promotes local shopping by allowing card holders to reduce their property tax bill or get a rebate on their purchases from participating businesses. All property addresses were sent a Shop Hillsborough card, while renters and non-residents who work in Hillsborough also benefit by receiving a rebate when they support businesses in the program. David said, "We hope to encourage local shopping in return for a rebate." He added "Hillsborough Township continues to have the most business participation compared to the other 17 towns that use the program in New Jersey." As commuters travel through Hillsborough, they are welcomed by Shop Hillsborough signs located at participating businesses and at the township's key gateways. The Shop Hillsborough App allows users to easily find program participants.



Advice for Green Team Leaders: When David was getting started, he met with Caroline Ehrlich, the Chief of Staff for Woodbridge Township. Woodbridge has received the Sustainability Champion award ten times. David appreciated all of the guidance he received from Caroline, especially her advice to recertify every year. David said, "There is tremendous benefit from achieving Sustainable Jersey certification each year, even though the certification is good for three years. This enables your sustainability program to build and grow stronger each year." He added, "Also, don't reinvent the wheel. Find the thing that makes your town unique or the issue that residents are passionate about and start there. Review what other towns have done and then put your own spin on it."



Education and Experience: David is a New Jersey licensed professional planner, certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners and a certified zoning official from the Rutgers Center for Government Services. David holds bachelor degrees in Sociology from Montclair State University and Planning and Public Policy from Rutgers University, Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. One of David's professors at Rutgers, Dr. Glen Belnay, recommended that he apply for an internship at Hillsborough Township. Dr. Belnay, who worked for Hillsborough Township for 45 years, was an important mentor for David. David has worked for Hillsborough Township since 2011 in various capacities of employment including business advocate, sustainability director, deputy zoning officer, deputy planning director and zoning officer. David is the president of the [New Jersey Association of Planning and Zoning Administrators](#) and is on the RideWise Board of Directors.



What You May Not Know About David: David was born in Red Bank, New Jersey and graduated from Middletown High School North. His parents instilled in him the importance of having a good job and working hard. He is the youngest of three brothers and the first in his family to go to college. When he is not working to save the planet, David loves time spent with his wife, Star Wars movies, comics and creating with Legos. David is embarking on a new adventure. In February 2020, David and his wife Eileen became parents, welcoming their son Hudson. David said he hopes he can inspire the next generation of sustainability heroes and will continue his work to pass on a healthy planet to his son and future generations.