

Green Team Times



Community Visioning: What to Do After Forming the Green Team

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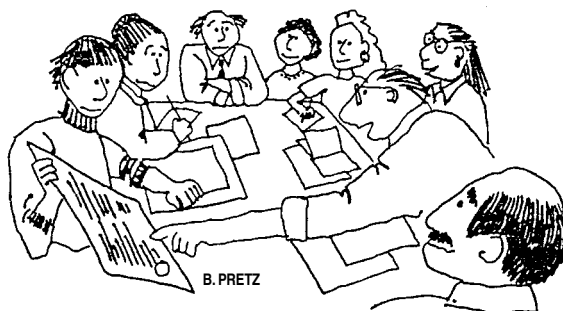
So, your town has registered to participate in Sustainable Jersey, and a green team has been formed. Now what?

This is a perfect time to ask the question, what does sustainability mean in my town? Every community is different, with different needs, resources and characteristics. Your local environmental commission and other boards and committees may already be working on various projects that support sustainability, but without broad community participation in establishing environmental, economic and social goals, your town is unlikely to stay on a path toward sustainability.

So, the first order of business for the new green team – which hopefully represents diverse sectors of the community – might be a community visioning process. Visioning guides the community through a collaborative and creative process that leads to an inspiring and compelling image of the future for your town.

Steps to community visioning

Begin by bringing together people from all key segments of the community to brainstorm. Public, private and nonprofit sectors should be represented, including elected officials, schools, faith communities, business owners, farmers, students, professional and community associations and residents from all ages, ethnic backgrounds, genders and neighborhoods. The legitimacy of the process and ultimate acceptance of the vision statement by the



community directly correlates to the diversity of the group who develop it.

The full process will probably require several sessions or workshops to get everyone's ideas on the table, identify common themes and priorities, gather data or supporting information, and prioritize goals. Your town may decide to bring in an outside facilitator to guide the process, although this is certainly not necessary.

There are a number of good visioning models and guides available at no cost, some more complex than others. Three are listed on the Sustainable Jersey toolkit for Community Visioning at www.sustainablejersey.com. Some can be completed in as little as one to three months, while others could require as much as 18 months to complete.

The final output of the process is called a vision statement, which answers the question, where should we be headed as a sustainable community? It doesn't need to be long; even a single sentence or a few bullet points may suffice.

Having a clear vision of the future sets the stage for fruitful action. Completing a community visioning process qualifies your town for 10 points under the Sustainable Jersey certification program. And once your community has created its vision

statement, you are ready for the next step—developing a sustainability plan that charts the actions necessary to achieve your community’s vision.

ANJEC is for green teams too

Green teams can now join ANJEC and obtain valuable support, training, resources and tools to help them operate more effectively, uncover new sources of funding, avert costly dead-end projects, and avoid environmental missteps as they define and implement sustainability goals. Membership benefits include:

- Free subscription to the *ANJEC Report* and online periodicals;
 - Access to our Resource Center’s extensive collection of ordinances, plans, reports, and the expertise of experienced staff;
 - Discounted registration on all workshops and eligibility for our Workshop Plan;
 - Access to customized ANJEC training for your town;
 - Discounts on all ANJEC publications.
- ANJEC membership is a great investment. If your environmental commission is already an ANJEC member, you can add up to seven members of your green team, for just \$130 per year, entitling them to the full range of ANJEC membership benefits. Or, if your green team is an extension of the environmental commission, you can add individual members for just \$20 each.

Special one-time offer

Take advantage of our 40th Anniversary Special and your green team can enjoy ANJEC membership benefits for the rest of 2009 and all of 2010 for the price of one year’s membership. That’s **three free month’s** worth of all ANJEC has to offer. See our web site at www.anjec.org for information about all our programs. 

You may already qualify

If your municipality has completed the steps necessary for Plan Endorsement through the State’s Office of Smart Growth (OSG), a required community visioning process has already taken place. Although that process tends to be more geared to land use and natural resource issues and may not address the social and economic aspects of sustainability, it will be accepted as a completed action that can earn points toward Sustainable Jersey certification.

Under the OSG guidelines, visioning must include at least two public workshops and at least two public hearings, one before the planning board and another before the governing body before submission of the final Vision statement to OSG.

Community visioning resources

The ANJEC Resource Center has numerous resources available on community visioning at (973) 539-7547 or by email resourcecenter@anjec.org. A few are listed below:

- ANJEC publication, “A Vision Statement: A Must for All Communities” – www.anjec.org/pdfs/SG_Vision.pdf
- “New Jersey Plan Endorsement Community Visioning Standards” – <http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/osg/docs/communityvisioningstandards.pdf>
- Global Warming Café Organizers Toolkit – downloadable at http://www.empowermentinstitute.net/lcd/lcd_files/Global_Warming_Cafe.html
- Rocky Mountain Institute “Framework for Community Sustainability” – http://www.rmi.org/images/PDFs/Communities/ER03-18_FrmwkCommSus.pdf
- Florida Dept. of Health “Field Guide for Visioning” – <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/compass/Resources/FieldGuide/3Visioning/Visioningstepbystep.htm> 