

Environmental Commission Annual Report for 2015

Throughout 2015, the City of Summit Environmental Commission (EC) worked to promote sustainability efforts in Summit through education, outreach and events, as well as by coordination of activities with other community organizations.

In 2015, the EC met 10 times, once each month with the exception of July and August. As dictated by state law, the EC has seven appointed commissioners and two alternates. Currently, there is one open position.

In addition to the EC commissioners, there is another informal group called the Green Team, which is comprised of Summit residents and City officials interested in participating on occasional projects, getting the monthly updates, and attending some meetings. The Green Team currently has about twenty members and includes, among others, Mayor Ellen Dickson, Council members Patrick Hurley (EC liaison) and Sandra Lizza, Public Information Officer Amy Cairns Harrison, and Shade Tree Advisory Committee Chairperson Christina Amundson.

Sustainable Jersey

EC members prepared the application for Summit's recertification with [Sustainable Jersey](#). Summit was recertified at the silver level with 485 points. Certification lasts for three years, although municipalities can apply every year. The current thought is not to reapply in 2016 instead focusing on building sustainability/resiliency into Summit's Master Plan, which will be rewritten in 2016.

New Initiatives

Home Energy Audits: With the help of City Administrator Michael Rogers and his staff, the City issued an RFP for [Home Performance with Energy Star](#)-certified contractors to be available to residents to do home energy audits at a reduced price. Once the City selects a contractor, all further action takes place solely between the homeowner and the contractor. The contractor will be responsible for a city-wide mailing announcing the project, and the EC will work to publicize the program via Facebook and other media outlets. The cost is likely to be \$49 per home, as opposed to a range of \$250-350, which many contractors charge now. Homeowners are under no obligation to have work done by the contractor doing the audit. If a homeowner opts to have work done by any certified contractor, he/she may be eligible for substantial rebates and/or interest-free loans, depending on the projected energy savings from the work.

Summit Green Star Program: Beth Lovejoy and Marjorie Fox (Recycling Advisory Committee chair) worked with Summit Downtown, Inc. and the Suburban Chamber of Commerce to develop and promote a new program to recognize local businesses and community organizations for their adoption of sustainable practices. A total of five actions (out of 32) in at least three of five categories qualifies participants for the Summit Green Star designation. Other green practices may be written in as well.

27 businesses and 12 community organizations have qualified. They each get a window cling and a congratulatory letter, as well as publicity for qualifying. A description of the benefits of the program, an online application, a list of qualifying businesses and organizations, and a "Best Practices" page appear on the City website under the [Environment](#) and [Business](#) tabs.

Biking: City Engineer Aaron Schrager met with [NJ Bike and Walk Coalition](#) representatives, and invited Beth Lovejoy, EC Chair, to attend. They discussed the possibility of installing one or more bike depots (enclosed locked areas for parking bikes; see info on [Montclair bike depot here](#)) in Summit. In December, Aaron arranged a meeting with City Administrator Michael Rogers, SDI representative Marin Mixon, Jin Blades from Community Services, and Beth Lovejoy to discuss the project. This will be an ongoing effort in 2016.

Annual and Ongoing Projects

Passaic River Trails: EC Commissioner Judith Mandelbaum has managed this project for many years in collaboration with Rick Matias and Aaron Schrager in the City's Engineering Department and Union County Environmental Specialist Betty Ann Kelly. In 2015, with a \$10,000 grant from Overlook Hospital/NJ Healthy Communities Network and with the assistance of Union County and City staff, Judith organized efforts to remove invasive species (primarily knotweed), prepare a plan for the area, organize volunteers to help with the ground preparation, build a kiosk with a trail map, clear and mark the trails, install a bike rack, and install attractive and low maintenance plantings at the trailhead on New Providence Ave. Eagle Scout candidate JJ Stewart spruced up the trail across the street from the kiosk running from the parking lot there to Risk Ave.

The trails have been publicized via multiple outlets, and trail walks guided by a Reeves Reed Arboretum staff member were offered during the "Party at the Dump." More than 70 people participated on the walks. The project is mostly done; a few more plants will be installed in spring 2016 with the remaining grant money.

This has been a collaborative effort, and the EC especially appreciates the help from Rick Matias, City Engineer, who created the trail map and helped organize the City Engineering and Public Works Departments' contributions.

Annual Earth Day Clean Up: EC Chair Beth Lovejoy with support from Commissioners and Green Team members Judy Mandelbaum, Marjorie Fox, Kelly Moughalian, Marian Glenn, John Kilby, and Patti Schneider Smith organized the annual [Earth Day Clean Up](#), which took place on April 18 and 19. About 200 volunteers of all ages collected trash and recyclables, removed invasive plants, and cleaned and woodchipped trails in five Summit locations. Of particular note is the intensive work that was done on the Passaic River trails.

The dates for the 2016 Earth Day Clean-Up are Saturday, April 23 for most of the sites, and Sunday, May 1 for work on the Hidden Valley Trail, to be run by the GreenFaith Circle.

Review of Plans for the Planning and Zoning Boards: EC member and New York City architect Rick Bell has reviewed plans to be presented to the Planning and Zoning Boards, and has provided suggestions, which usually relate to planting native species, addressing stormwater runoff, and green building practices.

Community Outreach

Communications: Many green-related posts have been made to the EC's [Summit, NJ: Talking Green. Living Green Facebook page](#), and the [Recycling Advisory Committee's Facebook page](#), as well as the [City of Summit Facebook page](#). In addition to green tips and advice, there was substantial publicity about work on the Passaic River Trails, the Summit Free Market spring and fall events, and the Ninth Annual Earth Day Clean Up (April 18 and 19), including newspapers (online and print), Facebook and Twitter.

The EC prepared a calendar of spring and summer outdoor and green events and published it via the City website and Facebook.

The EC maintains pdf flyers on various topics available under the [Environment tab](#) on the City of Summit website. Among the topics covered are recycling, stormwater management, and tree regulations and information.

Educational Tables at Events: Celgene invited the EC to have an informational table at their Earth Day Fair in April, which was hosted by Beth Lovejoy and Patti Schneider Smith (Green Team member). Beth Lovejoy, Linda Seelbach, Marjorie Fox, Ruth Gais and Kelly Moughalian hosted a table and arranged for guided trail walks at the "Party at the Dump" in June. John Kilby, Kelly Moughalian, Patti Schneider Smith and Beth Lovejoy manned a table for the EC at Community Night on the Green in July. Beth Lovejoy and Linda Seelbach (Green Team member) also manned an EC table at the YMCA's Health Fair in September.

Summit Free Market: Summit Free Market had very successful spring and fall events. Former EC members Amy Cairns and Christine Lijoi served as adult mentors for the student-run committee, and several EC members volunteered their time.

Community Garden: The third year for the community garden was a great success. EC member Marian Glenn has continued to have a significant role in managing the garden, and EC member Ruth Gais was also involved.

The EC welcomes suggestions and comments from the mayor, members of Common Council, City staff and the community. EC meetings are open to everyone and take place in the Whitman Room at 8 PM; they generally last about an hour. A list of 2016 meeting dates appears below.

Please join the Summit, NJ: Talking Green, Living Green Facebook open group page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184758811555182/>.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Lovejoy, Chairperson
City of Summit Environmental Commission

2016 Environmental Commission meeting dates:

1/18
2/8
3/21
4/18
5/16
6/20
No meetings in July and August
9/19
10/17
11/14
12/12