

Ewing Township Green Team 2021 Annual Sustainability Report

Executive Summary

2021 was the second of a couple of trying years for Green Team activity. While a few subcommittees met infrequently in person, the group as a whole continued its monthly meetings via Zoom due to the ups and downs of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our outreach activity continued to be seriously reduced as team members worked hard to stay healthy to keep the pandemic spread low. Zoom meetings tend to be unfortunately, less productive and satisfying. However, despite these challenges, the Team worked to continue to build on the accomplishments of prior years and towards fulfilling the goals set forth in our [Strategic Plan](#), developed during our 2014 /2015 Community Visioning. This work is supplemented by actions in the [Sustainable Jersey](#) certification program.

This year marked the third year of the Scarecrow Scavenger Hunt which generated quite a bit of excitement among participants and the return of the annual Ewing Fall Spin, which did not occur during 2020. The Fall Spin enjoyed its highest turnout ever and the Scavenger Hunt featured residential scarecrow hosts and a movable scarecrow, Stan ByMee, that

changed locations each week. With a sharper focus on a cleaner community in our sights, we also enjoyed terrific residential participation at a number of cleanups that were run throughout the year. We tender this Annual Sustainability Report as our primary means of reporting on our progress in accomplishing the key goals identified in the [Strategic Plan](#) and in pursuit of our [Sustainable Jersey](#) certification. We look forward to getting back out as the pandemic winds down and growing our relationships with local and regional partners and to involving more individuals, businesses, and community organizations in our efforts to shape a more sustainable future for our community.

We also owe great thanks to numerous other boards, committees, and organizations in town with whom we partnered to complete activities including, but not limited to, the Ewing Environmental Commission, the Arts Commission and Art Has No Boundaries.





Community Building—The Arts

Nothing captures the magic and the essence of the long glide into autumn like the celebration of Halloween. The Ewing Green Team has been working to harness the magic of the season since 2014 with our annual Scarecrow event. This event, which has now morphed from a simple contest to a community-wide scavenger hunt, meets multiple goals established in our long-ago Community Visioning process, those of building a more connected community and creating events for local businesses, all while celebrating The Arts with (very) creative uses of recycled materials.

Months of work went into this third year of the event with the final big push of creating fun 'Ewing-centric' clues and riddles that would test how well hunters know their hometown.

"Riddles and rhymes and even some pantomimes. You'll laugh and you'll cry, for a chance to enjoy the times.

Symbols and notes may be sprinkled throughout. To help you find scarecrows, so you don't get worn out.

And look for Stan ByMee, each week he will move. Then take a selfie so that you found him to prove."

Forty-one scarecrows were displayed

around town by businesses, civic groups, and residents. And wow! The creativity displayed was amazing! Elvis came to town, as did a Jack in the Box, Peter Pumpkin Eater, a marching band, Chickaletta, and Teddy Roosevelt. We had tire art in the form of Flyswatter, Croakster, and Frogger, & Lucy offered her Psychiatric Services, as well as many others.

New this year was Stan ByMee, the brainchild of Melissa Bennett, our very own scarecrow version of the "Elf on the Shelf." Hunters had a grand time finding him in his new location each week. Those who found him were directed to take a selfie with him and email it to the Green Team to be entered into drawings for prizes for keeping up with Stan.

And, speaking of prizes, \$850 in prize monies were donated by various anonymous individuals and Garry Keel from Money Management Associates. There were three prize drawings (\$200, \$100, and \$50) from amongst those who had found the required minimum number of scarecrows, as well as a StanByMee winner for each week (\$50) from amongst those who had submitted their photos with Stan. Finally, we had

three People's Choice awards (\$100 each): Residential - Christine Baran for **Aloha from New Jersey**; Business - Bountiful Gardens for **Hi! I'm Peter Pumpkin Eater**; and the Green Team award for the best use of recycled materials - the Schibel Family for **Jack in the Box**.

We owe a huge vote of thanks for another wonderful community event to event chair Lisa Feldman, and committee members Melissa Bennett, Mel Antler, Mark Wetherbee, Caroline Steward, Lisa Witt-Pinaire, Jennifer Keyes-Maloney, and Joanne Mullowney.

Quote

"I absolutely love the thrill of the hunt and finding them all. After the year we have had it really brought so much joy and was a festive fun thing. I love Halloween and creativity. All of the scarecrows were so awesome. Some were a real challenge!"

Emily Hopkins



This year marked the 6th annual Ewing Fall Spin, our annual community bike ride held entirely within the boundaries of Ewing Township. After our COVID hiatus during 2020, we found that riders were more than ready to ride out en masse again and we saw our largest contingent of biking enthusiasts to date sent off by Mayor Steinmann on Saturday morning, October 2nd.

Hosted by the Green Team's Bike Advocacy Group, a contingent of citizen volunteers interested in promoting a more bikeable Ewing, and

the Ewing Recreation Department, it was a glorious Saturday morning for a bike ride. Almost 60 riders departed early from the Ewing Community Center down to the Canal and on for an 11-mile trip thru town. Feedback was quite favorable, and riders commented positively about the police escort, the opportunity to enjoy Ewing by bike with others, as well as the camaraderie and community spirit.

This year's ride was run to support Anchor House, a local non-profit that works to provide a haven for abused, runaway, homeless, aging out and at-risk youth

and their families. Costs were covered by the Township and all proceeds were donated. The event concluded at the December 14, 2021 Ewing Council Meeting with the presentation of the event proceeds, a check in the amount of \$1190 to Anchor House representative Kathy Drulis.

Special thanks to Bike Committee Chair Garry Keel, and committee members, Mark Wetherbee, Pete Boughton, Joe Mirabella, Steve Czelusniak, Bob Kirby, Pat Coleman-Boatwright, Joanne Mullowney, and Ted Forst, Ewing Recreation Director for another fantastic event.

Goals

- ⇒ Promote healthy lifestyles
- ⇒ Raise awareness of bike safety
- ⇒ Raise awareness for the need for a more bikeable Ewing.
- ⇒ Create a stronger, better connected community.





Clean Communities

Litter is everyone's responsibility, so everyone needs to be involved. Businesses, industry, civic organizations, schools, and all residents should participate and support efforts to keep Ewing Township clean. Green Team members Donna Morgan and Priya Vimalassery are passionate about this aspect of sustainability and have led the charge in tackling and leading clean up events in town, especially over the past year and a half. From parks to trails, to streams, to the Delaware, all have been the beneficiaries of their enthusiasm. Donna acted as facilitator with outside agencies such as [The Watershed](#), the AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassador, NJ State Parks, and other agencies. Priya worked as the Green Team's sustainability ambassador to her own HOA, creating a Green Team within the organization. A summary of their activities follows:

October 16, 2021 Delaware River Cleanup Four members of the Green Team joined with a coalition of volunteer organizations for the 4th Annual Delaware River Cleanup on Saturday morning, October 16th. A massive cleanup of conditions and debris left after Hurricane Ida was called for. The Green Team represented Ewing at the Scudder Falls site,

as well as other community members. The fifteen total volunteers picked up 25 bags of trash with an estimated weight of approx. 1,000 lbs.

June 26, 2021 - Shabakunk Creek Park Adoption Event The Glendale Civic Association "Adopted a Park," the Shabakunk Creek Park, a little pocket park on Olden Avenue. The effort was being led by resident Karen Sayre. In conjunction with assistance from Green Team members Heidi Furman and Joanne Mullowney, and Councilwoman Jennifer Keyes-Maloney, they held a cleanup and native flower

planting/beautification event on Saturday, June 26th.

April 24, 2021 - Earth Day Stream Cleanup In celebration of Earth Day, the Ewing Green Team, The Watershed Institute, and about 70 volunteers gathered along the Shabakunk Creek behind the Hollowbrook Community Center for our annual stream cleanup. Almost 900 pounds of trash were collected by volunteers during the 2-hour clean-up.

April 3, 2021 - Johnson Trolley Trail (JTT) Cleanup An informal cleanup of a problem area reported by a local resident led to an impromptu cleanup. A small group of Green Team volunteers and residents





(about 10 people) spent a morning making a difference on the historic Johnson Trolley Trail.

March 20, 2021 - Spring Clean Up First Day of Spring Clean Up at Moody Park. About 45 volunteers were led by Green Team members and AmeriCorps Water Ambassador Amanda Weigand. Lots of full bags of garbage were collected and picked up by Public Works. Thanks also to Rita's Water Ice for their donations of refreshments following the event.

September 20, 2020 - Trash Dash On Sunday, September 20th, Ewingites took part in a TrashDash plogging event. This event was a part of a national all-day

event run by [Keep America Beautiful](#) and coordinated by the Green Team.

Priya has worked to encourage her own local community in its sustainability efforts. In March of 2021 she submitted a [Riverside Sustainability Proposal](#) to her Riverside Townhomes HOA. The Board was supportive and created a Green Committee which she leads. The Committee has since run at least five regular clean-ups in the neighborhood and a planting day of native plants. We look forward to hearing more from this group and hope that they

can act as a model for other HOAs to emulate in town.

Thanks are due the entire Team as this is an area where everyone pitches in.





Education and Outreach

Education and outreach to the Ewing community on topics relating to sustainability are a major component of the goals articulated in our 2015 Green Team Strategic Plan. We do this through a variety of outreach means. Much of this outreach was curtailed to a large extent during the pandemic. However, we were able to complete the following:

Tabling at local events National Night Out was back after the 2020 hiatus. The event was held on August 3rd and the EGT used the opportunity to advertise the Scavenger Hunt, the Bike Ride, and Gardening for Wildlife Gardening. Manning the table were Lisa, Joanne, Heidi, and Evan. Garry and his bike ride committee had a separate table to advertise the ride.

Social Media The EGT has maintained regular electronic outreach to Township residents via Facebook;

the Ewing Green Team [website](#), a sister site for the [Ewing Community Gardens](#) Committee, the Ewing Recycles [website](#), and our Wild About Ewing [website](#). Our primary [website](#) has been in operation since 2012. Our [Facebook](#) presence continues to grow, and we post at a minimum of 3 or 4 times a week on a variety of current topics. Our audience continues to grow. We now have 649 people who like our page and 721 people who follow us. We also send out newsletters advertising our events and conducting outreach on topics of interest multiple times during the year. During 2020 and 2021 we sent out 10 newsletters. Our total number of subscribers is almost 1200.

Shred Days The EGT is also a regular presence at the Township Shred Days using the opportunity to pass on flyers and pamphlets of current interest. 2021 topics included grasscycling and the new leaf and brush pickup guidelines, and information about the new plastic bag ban law, among others.





Promoting Wildlife and Biodiversity

The Team also continued its efforts to educate about our biodiversity crisis and advocate for wildlife. The **Wild About Ewing** committee headed by Joanne Mallowney had taken a partial COVID hiatus, but we remain an active advocate for gardening for wildlife on the web. Our programs, aimed at teaching gardeners to landscape sustainably and to value wildlife contributions were canceled thru the pandemic. However, we did put in multiple workdays at the pollinator garden in the front of the ESCC for the initial spring-cleaning effort. It had been neglected during 2020 and required a massive effort to attempt to take out the invasive field horsetail.

Our goal remains to achieve certification from the [National Wildlife Federation](#) as a [Community Wildlife Habitat](#) and it is a steep one. It is based on population and Ewing needs a total of 250 certification points. We are currently at about 100 points. Each residential garden is worth 1 point, each school is worth 5 points, and each public space is worth 3 points.

We also learned that TCNJ has a pollinator garden behind Campus Town. Joanne contacted them to see if they would certify it with the [National Wildlife Federation](#). Their Committee voted to apply for certification. Joanne sent them information about what they need to do to qualify. Miriam Shakow, the TCNJ professor in charge asked that Team members would liaise with their student committee in 2022 on recommendations for the campus moving forward.

The Glendale Civic Association also applied for and received certification from the [NWF](#) for their work at the Shabakunk Creek Park on Olden Avenue on planting native plants and establishing a wildlife

garden. Members from the Civic Association have done an excellent job establishing the garden which looks to be thriving.

Heidi Furman has been working diligently with the members of the [Ewing Township Historic Preservation Society \(ETHPS\)](#) to plant and maintain a native garden in front of the Benjamin Temple House at Drake Farm Park. With the support of the membership, she and





Promoting Wildlife and Biodiversity cont'd

members of the Society weeded and removed the non-native plantings in the garden and replaced them with natives. The garden is flourishing, and we look forward to its reemergence in the spring of 2022.

Heidi also works on the Birmingham Garden maintained by the West Trenton Garden Club at the corner of Bear Tavern and West Upper Ferry Roads. She and fellow Garden Club member Rick Lazarick have installed quite a few native plants and the garden is well on its way to meeting the requirements for certifying with the [NWF](#) once a water source can be worked out.

Joanne worked with two classes at TCNJ, a sociology class and an English class, Professors Diane Bates, and Glenn Steinberg, respectively, collaborated on a joint project that we can use for the Gardening for Wildlife project. The sociology class conducted a survey of certified and non-certified gardeners in

Ewing to discover why residents certified their gardens and what were the issues that prevented people from certifying their gardens. It is our plan to analyze their data to get helpful information to tailor our outreach to residents about the National Wildlife Federation certification program. The English class created a press release about our participation in the NWF program and our quest to get gardeners in town to certify, along with profiles of selected certified gardeners in town

Finally, we are pleased to report that the two meadow projects in town, our collaboration with the Mercer County Parks Department, at the Community Center and Village on the Green, have really started to fill in in 2021 and looked quite lush and beautiful.



Skip the Straw!

One garbage truck of plastic is discarded into our oceans every minute.¹

1. https://www.earthday.org/fact-sheet-plastics-in-the-ocean/#_ftn4

Thanks to changes in New Jersey law, area restaurants will no longer automatically give you a straw. Consider skipping the straw and save some sea life today! #skipthestrav



Plastic Education Campaign

Bag Up, Ewing Township!

On Nov 4, 2020 Governor Phil Murphy & the NJ State Legislature enacted the most progressive bag ban law in the country. The law prevents litter and encourages the use of reusable bags by phasing out single-use plastic and pa-

per bags. This puts NJ at the forefront of the effort to find a solution for our "plastic problem."

The law bans plastic bags, regardless of thickness, at grocery stores & retail outlets, as well as paper bags at grocery stores measuring more than 2,500 ft². It also bans clamshell food containers & other products such as plates, cups, food trays & utensils; and makes plastic straws at restaurants available only upon request.

Passage of the law called for an all-hands-on-deck response from the environmental organizations in the state to educate and inform the business community and residents of the changes and elicit cooperation and the Ewing Green Team rose to the challenge. A Plastic Subcommittee was formed to create outreach materials

and conduct that outreach. As a starter, we gave out 300 handouts on the new rules on single use plastic bag ban and straws during the fall Shred Day, but mostly concentrated on our straw outreach as the ban on giving out plastic straws went into effect first, on November 4th. The Team created a **Skip the Straw** campaign that included weekly updates to social media of our Skip the Straw flyers and outreach to local restaurants with informational cards to be put in restaurant/food establishments' windows to explain new changes for straws. The restaurant outreach has mostly been conducted in the new year (2022) with the campaign to continue its efforts on plastic bags and Styrofoam in the following months.





Recycling & Miscellaneous Actions

Shred Days

The EGT continued its perennial participation in the Ewing Township Shred Days over the past year despite the challenges of the pandemic. These days are always a great opportunity to interact with the public and promote various initiatives. This year we focused our outreach on the following topics: grasscycling, new leaf and brush pickup guidelines, and the plastic bag (and related items) ban law amongst other topics.

Sustainable Jersey Recertification Effort

In 2021 the Team began the process of organizing for our triennial recertification effort with the first submission due in mid-May. Team members met to determine which Sustainable Jersey actions Ewing might qualify for and began outreach efforts to various Boards, Township Departments, and outside groups. Councilwoman Jennifer Keyes-Maloney also began the work needed for Council approval. It

will be another all-hands-on deck situation through the beginning of 2022 as we work to finalize actions and write up reports.

Trails

Ewing resident Lynn Robbins and regular EGT volunteer, is particularly passionate about trail maintenance and creation in town and we have worked with her on a couple of trail cleanups: the Eagle Scout Trail #33 behind the Municipal Building and behind the Benjamin Temple House. She coordinated with the Boy Scouts and a trail clean-up was run on May 15th and has ventured out on the trail by herself for maintenance since. Volunteers from our Green Team included Joe Mirabella, Evan Crumiller, and Donna Morgan.

Lynn has also reached out to property owner TCNJ about the possibility of creating trails behind the Benjamin Temple House and after several staff changes, now has a contact who is interested in working with us. It is our hope that we can get a contingent of TCNJ student volunteers to begin creation of a new,

much-needed trail at that location.

The Mercer County Action Team is a group of trail/biking enthusiasts interested in promoting regional connectivity with a Circuit Trails Network who have reached out to us. Their goal is connecting a circuit trail of (4) counties on the New Jersey side and (4) counties in Pennsylvania which eventually will connect trails down to Philadelphia. There is need for a bike/pedestrian crossing over I-295 to complete a gap in the trail. Maintenance of the Johnson Trolley Trail (JTT) is an important part of our eventual connectivity to Trenton, and we should keep it on our to-do list.





Stormwater Control Education

New leaf and brush disposal guidelines, enacted as [Ordinance 21-08](#) in April 2021, require the bagging of leaves and brush in biodegradable bags for curbside pick-up by the Township. The changes, long required by the State, and reinforced by recent changes in State Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Rules, make the Township and its residents, compliant with existing State storm water rules.

The EGT worked during the year to promote the changes and conduct outreach to inform residents about them. We handed out the new brush and leaf collection flyers at NNO in August. But autumn was coming and to advertise this change in how leaf collection was handled we created a **Leave the Leaves** campaign promoting leaving mulched leaves on property. The idea was to explain to residents that leaves could be left in yard and cut-up by mowers and spread as mulch on residents' properties – a far better environmental solution than being carted away. The Team created a mailing list of landscapers who do fall cleanup work and sent out a mailing to them informing them of the changes and directing them to additional information on the Township's website at ewingnj.org/mulch-in-place. We also planned for an outreach event on **Leaving the Leaves** with a brief presen-

tation and discussion, followed by a demonstration, run by Mark Wetherbee, Joe Mirabella, and Joanne Mullowney. Unfortunately, change comes hard and there were no takers. We will try again in future.

As a part of our effort on reducing stormwater pollution in town, Joanne requested from Public Works a copy of the scanned list of all the storm drains in Ewing. She entered them into an Excel spreadsheet with the goal of adding the GPS coordinates (longitude and latitude) for each drain (around 1900 drains). The list was distributed to Team members who volunteered to use Google Earth to find the coordinates and enter them into the spreadsheet. It is our goal to publish this list in map format and conduct an outreach campaign to encourage residents to **Adopt a Storm Drain** in their own neighborhoods. This should help ensure that the drains are cleaned of leaves and debris so that stormwater runoff is not blocked. Thanks for this effort go to Donna Morgan, Priya Vimalassery, Heidi Furman, Charlie Maack (Environmental Commission), Sonya Travis, Evan Crumiller, Joanne Mullowney, and Lisa Feldman. This project is still a work in process.

Green Amendment

Environmental rights are mentioned in many states' constitutions, but these rights don't recognize and protect clean water and air as rights in the bill of rights section. Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, has been passionately advocating for a constitutional amendment to recognize clean water and air as a basic civic right since at least 2017. In the fall of 2020, she shared her passion for this work at a Green Team meeting and inspired us all to support its passage.

There have been bills in support of the Green Amendment in both houses of the NJ legislature for the last several years. These, when passed, would authorize placement of the Green Amendment on the ballot to be voted upon by the people of our state in the general election. Since that time, Green Team member Priya Vimalassery has been advocating for and seeking Ewing residents to write to Township Council in support of a resolution in support of the Green Amendment. Our goal is to inform our legislators of the support of Ewing Township and its residents and to encourage them to vote for its passage when it comes up for a vote. Letters of support have trickled in, but more work is needed on this action.



Learn more at ewinggreenteam.org

Respectfully Submitted By
Joanne Mallowney
for the 2021 Ewing Green Team

2021 OFFICERS & BOARD

Joanne Mallowney, Chair
Evan Crumiller, Vice-Chair
Lisa Feldman, Secretary
Caroline Steward, Membership
Malissa Arnold
Heidi Furman
Garry Keel
Joseph-Mark Mirabella
Donna Morgan
Priya Vimalassery
Mark Wetherbee
Jack Wolfarth —Student Ambassador
Jennifer Keyes-Maloney, Council Rep
James McManimon, Admin Rep.
Mike Meenan, Staff Rep.

Conclusion

This report summarizes the highlights of the Sustainable Ewing Green Team activities during 2021. We extend our thanks to Mayor Bert Steinmann and Township Business Administrator Jim McManimon who have been key partners in our work. Members of the 2021 Township Council: Kevin Baxter, Jennifer Keyes-Maloney, David Schroth, Sarah Steward, and Kathy Wollert have also lent their unfailing support for our actions. In particular, our Council representative, Jennifer Keyes-Maloney, has been a tower of strength and environmental ambition during the year helping to move us forward. We would also like to recognize Recreation Director Ted Forst, who regularly works with us to complete important projects such as the bike ride, and the Scarecrow event, as well as other actions. A great shout out goes to Mark Wetherbee, our team photographer who is always faithful in recording our activities.

We also owe great thanks to numerous other boards, committees, and organizations in town with whom we partnered to complete activities including,



but not limited to, the Ewing Environmental Commission, the Arts Commission, the Ewing Township Historic Preservation Society, the Girl Scouts, and Art Has No Boundaries.

We conclude with a commitment to follow the blueprint provided by our [Strategic Plan](#). Our work in 2022 will be to complete the actions that will contribute towards our Sustainable Jersey recertification at the Silver Level and submit write ups of the same by the May deadline. It is our hope to revisit the plan with another Community Visioning in the not-too-distant future and also promote a much needed Climate Action Plan.

I offer special thanks to the members of the Team, who were incredibly faithful despite the adversities of the pandemic. I am grateful that they all remained healthy throughout.