

Environmental Literacy Toolkit

Sustainable Long Island's **Environmental Justice Advisory Council** convenes leaders in health, environment, planning, government, and communities across Long Island to increase awareness of environmental justice issues and develop strategies for empowering local advocates to address such challenges.

What is environmental justice?

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (US EPA).

In this Toolkit

Introduction

Environmental Justice on Long Island

Case Studies

Public Participation: *How to engage your community in a discussion about environmental justice and determine proactive next steps.*

Resources

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Sustainable Long Island's Environmental Justice Advisory Council

The time for a Long Island Environmental Justice Advisory Council is now. The environmental justice movement has been growing and continues to intensify across the country. Locally, many communities are aware of environmental issues facing Long Island and seek to address them as they implement community plans. Sustainable Long Island has strong, lasting relationships with community partners across Long Island, connections with regional and national groups and agencies working on environmental justice, and emphasizes equity in all of our work.

A regional Environmental Justice Advisory Council will help to raise awareness, increase empowerment of low-to-moderate income communities, and move communities that have participated in visioning activities in the past toward implementation of relevant plans for building healthy, resilient communities.

Sustainable Long Island has many years of experience in convening civic groups, business owners, residents, and government agencies and engaging communities in the planning and implementation process to advance sustainable development. Building upon this expertise, Sustainable Long Island will provide technical assistance to our existing network of community partners and new community organizations as they work toward implementing strategies to strengthen local leadership, increase representation in decision-making processes, and address environmental justice.

Environmental Literacy Toolkit

The Sustainable Long Island Environmental Justice Advisory Council has developed this Environmental Literacy Toolkit as a resource for communities to guide and develop environmental literacy campaigns, and provide tools for informed decision-making.

The Environmental Literacy Toolkit will:

1. Serve as a resource for EJAC members, community partners, and other stakeholders as they address environmental justice concerns and develop community-based environmental literacy campaigns;
2. Provide information about environmental justice issues on Long Island;
3. Help stakeholders identify strategies that improve short- and long-term conditions, while finding balance between policies and investments that protect the environment, support economic development, improve public health, and create a better quality of life for all community members;
4. Analyze consequences of programmatic and policy decisions, while helping local leaders to make informed decisions about land use and economic and environmental sustainability considerations; and
5. Foster a community-wide understanding of environmental justice, encourage local leadership, and provide recommendations for actions, educational campaigns, implementing community-based land use plans.

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Environmental Justice Priorities

Sustainable Long Island's Environmental Justice Advisory Council discussed priority environmental justice issues on Long Island as related to planning and land use, physical, economic, and/or demographic concerns across the region.

Physical

- Open spaces / parks – clean & safe
- Transportation
- Waste management

Economic

- Employment
- Access to resources—food, housing, healthcare, and insurance

Demographic

- Income
- Education
- Obesity / chronic illness (Public health)
- Diversity in communities

Planning and Land Use

- Infrastructure—housing, transportation, available and/or vacant land
- Locally undesirable land uses (LULUs)

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Environmental Community Profiles

The Environmental Community Profiles will be used as a tool for advocacy at the community-level, empowering individuals and groups to take proactive steps toward improving their communities.

In the profiles, which will be available at the county, town, village, zip code, and census tract levels, information is presented on demographics, environmental health, economics, environment and transportation, education, employment, housing, and waste management.

The data gathered is from publicly available sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau and NYS Department of Health, and can be measured over time.

Using these Environmental Community Profiles, individuals and groups will be able to better understand the existing conditions of their communities, and areas where they can work together to build on strengths, improve upon weaknesses, and enhance the quality of life.

Comparisons can be made between communities to help demonstrate regional perspectives.

LONG ISLAND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL	
Environmental Community Profiles Village of Hempstead - 2013	
All data based on the US Census American Community Survey, 2010, 5-year estimates. Except where noted, health insurance estimates is based on US Census American Community Survey, 2010, 1-year estimates.	
Demographics	
Total Population	53,584 100.0%
White Non-Hispanic (NH)	12,700 23.7%
Asian NH	36,009 67.2%
Other NH	1,312 2.4%
Two or more races NH	2,012 3.8%
Hispanic origin	22,440 41.9%
Female	29,038 54.2%
Male	23,546 43.9%
Under 5 years old	4,258 7.9%
18 years and older	40,207 75.0%
65 years and older	3,387 6.3%
Environmental Health Indicators	
Zip Codes covered	11150
Percent of births between 2008-2010 reported as low birth weight	10.3%
Asthma Emergency Dept. visits per 10,000 people between 2008-2010 for ages	
0 to 4	371.8
5 to 17	222.8
18 to 64	91.1
65 and over	65.4
Number of cancer incidences between 2005-2009	
Breast Cancer	175
Percent of Cases in County	2.97%
County Ranking	7/62
Long and Broadest Cancer	115
Percent Female	24.8%
Percent of Cases in County	45.2%
County Ranking	2/33%
County Ranking	14/62
Rates of hospital admissions per 100,000 people by area vs. statewide rate	
Angina	41/32
Asthma	264/176
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	479/224
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	201/181
Coronary heart failure	418/252
Hypertension	143/72
Economics	
Median Family Income (MFI)	\$58,907
Families whose income is	
Less than \$10	74 0.1%
Between \$10-\$24	2,445 4.6%
Between \$25-\$49	1,490 2.8%
Between \$50-\$74	2,538 4.7%
Between \$75-\$100	1,341 2.5%
Greater than \$100	2,593 4.8%
Families receiving public assistance and area average	
Cash public assistance	1,311 2.4%
Food stamp/ SNAP benefits	2,849 5.3%
Supplemental Security Income	1,332 2.5%
Area average of population over 16 years old	
In civilian labor force	70.0%
Civilian labor force unemployed	9.2%
Percentage of total unemployed	11.4%
Population lacking health insurance coverage (by town)	
Total non-employment	9.2%
Under 18 years old	3.3%
In labor force, between 18-64 years old	11.8%
Employed	11.8%
Unemployed	13.0%
Not in labor force	13.0%
Environment and Transportation	
Land area (in sq. mi.)	3.68
Population density per sq. mi.	14,356
Means of commuting to work by percent of population	
Vehicle, drove alone	83.1%
Vehicle, carpooled	13.5%
Public transportation	1.5%
Walked or bicycled	4.8%
Other means	3.3%
Worked at home	1.6%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	31.13
Avg. travel time in minutes to work by commuting type	
Vehicle (alone)	23.1%
Vehicle (carpool)	23.1%
Public transportation	32.0%
Walked or bicycled	16.1%
Other means	41.1%
Worked at home	31.3 min.
Mean travel time - 25.6 min.	
Fuel used for home heating	
Utility gas	53.1%
Electricity	8.3%
Fuel oil	37.7%
Solar energy	0.0%
Other non-renewable fuels	1.0%

LONG ISLAND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL	
Environmental Community Profiles Village of Hempstead - 2013	
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Education	
Total population over 25 years old	34,563
Area average educational attainment	
Less than 9th grade	19.2%
9th to 12th grade (no diploma)	11.4%
High school graduate (HS)	29.9%
Some college (no degree)	16.3%
Associate's degree	6.7%
Bachelor's degree	10.5%
Graduate or professional degree	6.0%
Total population over 3 years old	13,569
Area average school enrollment	
Nursery/Pre-school	4.4%
Elementary	4.3%
Elementary (grades 1 to 8)	42.0%
High school	20.3%
College or graduate school	25.8%
Employment	
Total working population 16+ years old	25,626
Occupation	
Management, business, science or arts	20.6%
Service-related	22.0%
Sales and office	21.8%
Construction or maintenance	11.6%
Production, transportation, and moving	14.0%
Industry	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	0.2%
Construction	8.8%
Manufacturing	6.7%
Wholesale trade	3.1%
Retail trade	12.1%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	5.8%
Information	2.2%
Finance, insurance, and real estate	6.6%
Professional, management, and other	10.0%
Education, health, and social	23.2%
Arts, entertainment, recreation and food	12.2%
Other services	5.6%
Public administration	3.9%
Housing	
Total Housing Units	17,671
Population living in residence for 1+ years	52,734
Area average population in residence for 1+ years	
Some house	87.2%
Resided in a different house, but from	
Some house	8.3%
Some other	2.9%
Difficult move	0.6%
Abroad	1.0%
Year area housing structures were built	
2000 or later	2.8%
1990 to 1999	3.8%
1980 to 1989	3.3%
The NYC legislation for lead paint, mold & asbestos	
1970 to 1979	9.7%
1960 to 1969	14.7%
1950 to 1959	22.5%
1940 to 1949	17.3%
1939 or earlier	23.9%
Area gross rent as a percentage of household income	
Owner occupied dwellings	54.1%
Renter occupied dwellings	37.5%
Area median gross rent	\$720
Rent is 30% or more of gross income	12.0%
Rent is greater than 35% of gross income	0.5%
Area average families and households	
Family households	68.9%
With one child under 18 years old	31.1%
Average household size (persons)	3.28
Average family size (persons)	3.82
Waste Management	
Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) in tons by town	
Incinerated	\$44,640
Transported	0
Recycled (Curbside)	15,916
Paper	43,711
Construction	22,762
Compost / yard waste	66,602
Metals & Other	22,955
Waste generated in pounds/person/day	
MSW	5.03
Recycling	1.14
Compost	0.22
Paper and containers (curbside)	0.48

Environmental Literacy Toolkit

Why get involved?

Sustainable Long Island and the Environmental Justice Advisory Council intend for this toolkit to provide tools, resources, and inspiration for your community to advance planning and implementation strategies that will help to build healthy, resilient, equitable communities.

As you move through the process, be sure that you and your partners:

1. Identify a vision comprised of common goals;
2. Determine what other partnerships may be beneficial to your work, whether they be existing relationships or ones that have yet to be made; and
3. Clearly outline next steps— make sure that everyone involved is informed of what their role and responsibilities are.

The discussion can be initiated by holding meetings within your community that are inclusive and participatory, and continued by working together to set and achieve a key goal, from improving asthma rates or creating more opportunities for meaningful job opportunities. It is important to have such a goal in mind so that you can find additional support from your local representatives and elected officials, and others who may be able to help your vision be realized.

Keep in mind: positive, clear, and measurable goals are often easier to achieve or track progress toward accomplishments.

Hint: have background facts ready before meeting with your elected officials. The NYS, Nassau, and Suffolk Boards of Elections are good sources of information to determine who your elected officials are.

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The following are examples of successful environmental justice initiatives with positive impacts to the environment and economy.

Suffolk County Stormwater Management Program

This initiative aims to educate residents of Suffolk County about water quality protection issues and engage them in efforts to reduce the negative impacts of storm water on our environment. In addition to education and outreach, Suffolk County is implementing a comprehensive Stormwater Management Program, upgrading and expanding stormwater control methods, and identifying, mapping, and monitoring stormwater discharges from County roads and properties.



Healthy Lawns, Clean Water

Through this program, Suffolk County is raising awareness about how fertilizers affect our water resources, while providing best practices for maintaining a healthy lawn in a more sustainable way. The County provides useful tips for irrigating, applying nitrogen fertilizers to lawns, and selecting a maintenance program. By encouraging alternative techniques to lawn care, Suffolk County also benefits by reducing risks to the environment and community health.



Source: Healthy Lawns, Clean Water *How we can have both*

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Black Mesa Water Coalition - Navajo Nation

The Black Mesa Water Coalition is an intertribal grassroots organization founded by Navajo and Hopi youths in 2001. After its foundation, the Coalition successfully advocated for the Navajo Green Jobs Act, which will help develop the economy of the Navajo Nation through the creation of sustainable job opportunities that preserve traditional practices. The Navajo Green Economy Commission will be responsible for coordinating green economic planning and securing funding and will be composed of a diverse group of people, including youth, women, and NGO representatives. Black Mesa Water Coalition has used Facebook to connect more than 700 Navajo and Hopi youths interested in revitalizing their communities through green employment opportunities.

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Purpose of the Meeting:

- 1) Engage community members in a discussion about environmental justice;
- 2) Encourage and strengthen leadership at the local level
- 3) Empower local advocates to develop and implement strategies for addressing such challenges, creating healthy and resilient communities.

By using this model, meetings can be replicated by diverse individuals and groups at a variety of times and locations, in effort to maximize community involvement in environmental justice issues.

Materials: agenda, sign-in sheets, participant survey, facilitator feedback form, large flipcharts, notepads, markers, and pens

Overview of Meeting Facilitation

Invite: Identify participants to invite to the meeting. This may include individuals who represent a specific geographical area, or members of an existing group, i.e. community leaders, civic associations, local environmental organizations. Keep the size small to facilitate discussion. Set a central location, and provide invitees at least two weeks notice.

Remind: Call or email invitees a day or two before the meeting.

Set up: With a small group, chairs can be arranged in a U-shape, circle, or around a table so that participants can see one another throughout the discussion and interactive activities.

Facilitate: As the facilitator, it is important that you help to keep the discussion focused, positive, and on topic. Make sure that all participants have a chance to provide input.

Share: Keep participants involved! Provide an overview of the meeting and next steps.

Collaborate: Sustainable Long Island encourages continued collaboration with our organization, EJAC, and other groups who can provide information, tools, and resources for community involvement and empowerment and addressing environmental justice.

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Facilitator Guidelines

The role of the facilitator is to generate thoughtful discussion among a group of stakeholders with diverse perspectives, while providing an open and respectful atmosphere. It is important that the process be inclusive and transparent—be sure to record all ideas and to obtain appropriate contact information if follow up should be needed. The focus of the meeting is identifying local environmental justice concerns and how they can be addressed, while simultaneously building support from within the community to take proactive steps to improve the community.

Guidelines for Discussion:

1. Stay focused, the topic of the meeting is environmental justice;
2. Share ideas;
3. Listen, be respectful and considerate;
4. Everyone has an opportunity to speak - allow others to participate.

Meeting Materials: copies of the agenda, sign-in sheets, participant survey, facilitator feedback form, large flipcharts, notepads, markers, and pens. Collecting RSVPs will help to estimate how many supplies are needed.

Welcome & Introductions: The facilitator asks each participant to introduce themselves and the organization each represents.

For the interactive activities described on the next page, the group (or break-out groups, if the participation rate is high) should designate someone to record ideas and someone to report back on the findings.

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Facilitator Guidelines

Exercise A: Discussion of community strengths and identity. This activity invites participants to think about what makes their community unique, as well as to articulate the strong, positive qualities of their home.

Exercise B: Discussion of community weaknesses, threats, and environmental justice concerns. This activity offers a chance for community members to identify the areas where their communities can be improved, while building upon the conversation about existing strengths. Emphasis should be on opportunities for enhancing communities.

Exercise C: Discussion of action items for addressing environmental justice issues. This activity is meant to facilitate a proactive discussion about how community members can maintain and/or improve their involvement in planning and land use decision-making processes, while determining strategies for building healthy, resilient communities.

Next Steps: Discuss how participants can stay involved and outline proactive, positive steps for addressing local environmental justice priorities.

Adjournment: Thank participants for their input and involvement.

These meetings will help to facilitate a discussion about environmental justice and how these challenges can be addressed, as well as to further partnerships with existing organizations who can provide resources through implementation. Sustainable Long Island encourages that the process be collaborative and build upon existing networks of partners.

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Sample Invitation

You're invited!

To discuss local environmental justice issues
in your community.

WHEN

WHERE

WHO

This meeting will:

1. Engage community members in a discussion about environmental justice;
2. Encourage and strengthen leadership at the local level
3. Empower local advocates to develop and implement strategies for addressing such challenges, creating healthy and resilient communities.

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Meeting Agenda

MEETING PURPOSE

1. Engage community members in a discussion about environmental justice;
2. Encourage and strengthen leadership at the local level
3. Empower local advocates to develop and implement strategies for addressing such challenges, creating healthy and resilient communities.

SAMPLE AGENDA

Group Name

Date

- I. Overview of meeting
- II. Discussion of environmental justice
- III. Interactive discussion
- IV. Adjournment

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

During the meeting, we will discuss community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as they relate to environmental justice. The goal is to have an inclusive discussion that enables us to proactively address such challenges within our community, so that we can work together to improve land use and planning processes and build healthy, resilient communities.

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Exercise A: Identify community strengths and opportunities

This interactive discussion will encourage participants to analyze the strengths of their community, with a focus on local assets.

What features and/or attributes make the community distinct?

Facilitator notes:

What aspects of the community make it “home”?

Facilitator notes:

What are three aspects that you appreciate about the community?

Facilitator notes:

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Exercise B: Evaluate local environmental justice concerns, threats, and weaknesses

This interactive discussion will enable participants to share input on what types of environmental justice issues the community is faced with.

All are encouraged to contribute ideas.

What features and/or amenities are missing from the community?

Facilitator notes:

What environmental challenges is the community is faced with?

Facilitator notes:

Identify three aspects of the community that could be made better.

Facilitator notes:

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Exercise C: Develop Action Items

After having identified environmental justice issues within your community, discuss some ways that you can work together to address these challenges.

Has the community completed a community planning process?

- a. If yes, what stage of the process is the it in?
- b. If no, do you think that this will strengthen the community?

Facilitator notes:

Who are important community stakeholders?

Facilitator notes:

What existing resources can be built upon to improve the health and resiliency of the community?

Facilitator notes:

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[Optional] Participant Survey

The following questions are **optional**. This brief survey will help us to better understand who has been involved in local environmental justice issues, as well as areas where this tool can be improved.

What is your gender? Male Female

What is your age? _____

How many people live in your household? _____

Do you own or rent your home? Rent Own Neither

Which of the following best describes your race/ethnic group? You may choose more than one category.

African-American/Black

American Indian & Alaskan Native

Asian

Hispanic or Latino

White/Caucasian

Two or More Races

Other: _____

Rate the effectiveness of this meeting.

1	2	3	4	5
Poor				Excellent

Please provide suggestions for how these meetings can be improved:

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How to Return Input

Sustainable Long Island and the Environmental Justice Advisory Council will serve as a resource for communities who are addressing environmental justice challenges in an inclusive, meaningful, and proactive way. We hope that these meetings will foster a better understanding of these issues at the local level and how they translate to a regional scale. Sustainable Long Island encourages that these efforts be collaborative, and build upon local knowledge and leadership.

For those interested in sharing the results in the meeting with us, please send an overview of the meeting and next steps to Sustainable Long Island at:

**399 Conklin Street, Suite 202
Farmingdale, New York 11735**

or

info@sustainableli.org

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Facilitator Feedback Form

Please provide feedback and help to improve this community outreach and engagement tool.

Rate the utility of this tool for expanding public participation.

1	2	3	4	5
Poor				Excellent

Rate the clarity and ease of understanding of the materials.

1	2	3	4	5
Poor				Excellent

Please provide suggestions for how the Environmental Justice Toolkit can be improved:

How successful was the meeting in:

Including diverse stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5
Enhancing public participation	1	2	3	4	5
Facilitating discussions	1	2	3	4	5

Would you recommend this toolkit to others? Yes No

Additional comments:

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Community Engagement

Plan East Tennessee (PlanET). “Meeting in a Box.” <http://www.planeasttn.org/About.aspx>

United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA). “The Model Plan for Public Participation.” February 2000. <http://www.epa.gov/projctxl/nejac.htm>

Environment

Citizens Campaign for the Environment

<http://www.citizenscampaign.org/>

The Nature Conservancy

<http://www.nature.org/>

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/>

Environmental Justice

Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2

<http://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/region2.html>

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Potential Environmental Justice Area Maps. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/899.html>

U.S. EPA.

Office of Environmental Justice

<http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/>

U.S. EPA. “Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities: Strategies for Advancing Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Development.” February 2013. http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/equitable_development_report.htm

U.S. EPA. “EPA’s Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model.” June 2008. <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/grants/cps-manual-12-27-06.pdf>

We Act for Environmental Justice. “Environmental Justice and the Green Economy: A Vision Statement and Case Studies for Just and Sustainable Solutions.” <http://www.weact.org/Publications/EJtheGreenEconomy/tabid/583/Default.aspx>

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Health

Nassau County Department of Health

www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/health

New York State Department of Health

www.health.ny.gov/

Suffolk County Department of Health Services

www.suffolkcountyny.gov/health

Non-Profit Organizations

ERASE Racism.

<http://www.eraseracismny.org>

Long Island Progressive Coalition

<http://lipc.org/>

Sustainable Long Island

www.sustainableli.org

Planning

Long Island Regional Planning Council

www.lirpc.org

Nassau County Planning Commission

<http://www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/Planning/index.html>

Suffolk County Planning Department

<http://www.scwa.com/>

Regional Plan Association

www.rpa.org/

Water

Nassau Soil and Water Conservation District

<http://nassauswcd.org/>

Suffolk County Water Authority

<http://www.scwa.com/>