

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

February 2022



André Sayegh
Mayor, City of Paterson, Passaic County

Paterson Mayor André Sayegh is leading a renaissance in the third largest city in New Jersey, driven in part through tourism and economic development with a focus on sustainability around the city's greatest natural resource – the [Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park](#). “The “Silk City” is becoming a “Sustainable City,” said Mayor Sayegh. “Paterson is on the move and we have our sights set on sustainability initiatives that save money and increase the quality of life for our residents. We’re returning to our renewable roots to revive the city's economy and environment.”

Mayor Sayegh suggests that Paterson is one of the first sustainable cities. Over two hundred years ago, its founder, Alexander Hamilton, and the early industrialists harnessed the power and renewable energy potential of the Passaic River. The source of that power is the 80’ drop in the Passaic River at the Great Falls.

As an early supporter of Sustainable Jersey, Sayegh led the City of Paterson to achieve certification for the first time in 2010. Paterson is currently bronze-certified and working towards silver certification and a Sustainable Jersey Energy Gold Star. They have begun to electrify their municipal fleet and embark on comprehensive energy efficiency actions. Paterson is one of eight municipalities that have been designated as a [Healthy Town in 2020](#) by the Mayors Wellness Campaign. Thanks to Mayor Sayegh’s outreach and communications, the city has successfully vaccinated nearly all of its adult residents. The city won a 2021/2022 Global Mayors Challenge award for Paterson’s Appropriate Medication-Assisted-Treatment Anytime, Anywhere, also known as RealFix.

Mayor Sayegh is hardworking and dedicated, thanks in part to the values instilled in him by his mother, Raymonde Sayegh. He is known for his unfaltering energy and passion for the City of Paterson. In 2018, he became the first Arab-American elected as Paterson’s mayor; before that, he served ten years on the City Council, representing the 6th Ward. He brings a deep appreciation and understanding of different cultures to the mayor’s office which strengthens his leadership of one of the most ethnically diverse communities in New Jersey.

Sustainability efforts are managed by Paterson Public Information Officer Dacil Tilos, city staff and an active Paterson Green Team and Environmental Commission. You can review their accomplishments in the [Paterson City 2021 Sustainable Jersey Certification Report](#).



Municipal Electric Vehicle Fleet: “Paterson is becoming a 21st century city with electric cars,” Mayor Sayegh said as he explained that Paterson has purchased 35 Nissan Leaf electric vehicles that are being used for local travel by city

employees in divisions and departments such as Community Improvement, Economic/Community Development, Health, Fire and others that conduct inspections. By improving the municipal fleet's fuel efficiency and reducing overall emissions, Paterson will benefit from long-term energy and cost savings, healthier air and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Mayor Sayegh added, "We're taking a major step forward in our country's future and being part of the solution to eliminate pollution. I feel electrified by the fact that, finally, we're getting to where we need to go as a sustainable city."

Energy Efficiency for Municipal Facilities: The City of Paterson participated in New Jersey's Clean Energy Program [Local Government Energy Audit \(LGEA\)](#) to examine Paterson's facilities and see how to improve their energy use. The audit identified cost-effective energy efficiency measures for 19 buildings. Sustainable Jersey provided technical assistance to prepare the LGEA application and is currently assisting Paterson with preparing documentation for the [Energy Savings Improvement Program \(ESIP\)](#), which will help finance the upgrades through cost savings on energy use. Paterson received 10 points for the Sustainable Jersey action [Energy Efficiency for Municipal Facilities](#) for doing LGEAs on their whole building portfolio.



Building a Healthier Community: Mayor Sayegh has done an outstanding job identifying challenges and opportunities to improve health outcomes for all residents. The City of Paterson is one of eight municipalities that have been designated as a Healthy Town for 2020 by the Mayors Wellness Campaign. The Healthy Town designation highlights the importance of addressing health broadly to incorporate social and economic opportunities that shape health and well-being. Paterson has continued its efforts throughout the pandemic. Mayor Sayegh is a true champion for the program, which had Paterson First Lady, Farhanna Sayegh, host women's workouts in their own backyard. She said, "In 2020, I kicked off the Paterson Women's Workouts. For six months, we worked out weekly with certified trainers giving participants the opportunity to learn efficient workout moves. It was also an opportunity to reconnect after intense social isolation."



Prior to the Mayors Wellness Campaign program's shift due to the City's COVID-19 response, a kickoff event, "Mayor's Walk to The Great Falls," was held in January 2021. The event increased awareness of the health benefits of staying active and encouraged Paterson residents to plan outdoor walks and create walking groups. The program engaged all Paterson residents, including students from nearby schools, where Mayor Sayegh led a group walk from City Hall to the Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park. Over 200 people participated in person and the walk was broadcasted on Facebook Live as well. Paterson received 25 points towards its Sustainable Jersey certification with this work through the action: [Building Healthier Communities](#).

Paterson COVID-19 Response: Mayor Sayegh was one of the first leaders in New Jersey to implement a local-level COVID-19 Task Force to enforce social distancing and city regulations. He was also one of the first to provide near daily updates on the City's regulations, data, testing and eventual vaccination procedures. "Although we would have never anticipated a pandemic, we quickly repurposed our wellness campaign to keep our residents safe during this crisis," said Mayor Sayegh. "Our focus was on the mental and physical health of Patersonians." The City of Paterson has one of the highest vaccination rates for adults in New Jersey. In addition to exemplary public communication since the onset of the pandemic, Paterson started other innovative initiatives in the wake of the pandemic to address food insecurity and other

sustainable future. As part of the #PatersonReads initiative, Paterson First Lady Farhanna Sayegh hosted a reading tent at the event. Hundreds of used books in excellent condition and healthy snacks/beverages were handed out to children. The First Lady read a few earth-friendly books including a series from *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss!

Education and Experience: Sayegh graduated with the highest honors from Seton Hall University with a Bachelor’s degree in History. He earned a Master’s Degree in Public Policy and Administration from Columbia University and served as President of the Student Government. Sayegh remains an adjunct professor at Passaic County Community College, where he has taught for 17 years. Prior to his election to the City Council, Sayegh served on the Paterson Board of Education, as Chief of Staff for State Senator John A. Girgenti and as a Field Representative for Congressman Bill Pascrell. Mayor Sayegh has received many recognitions throughout his career, but especially likes to mention his Employee of the Month Award he received working during his teenage years at Burger King and the 1999 Teacher of the Year Award from the Princeton Review where he taught SAT prep classes. His students at Passaic County Community College give him ideas and suggestions for Paterson. “They provide honest feedback. Some students are active on the green team,” he said. “They see the impact and importance of sustainability issues.”



More About Mayor Sayegh: Paterson is the only home Mayor Sayegh has ever known. He was born and raised in the city where he now raises his three children – two daughters and a son – with his wife, Farhanna. When he is not out and about in Paterson, he can be found blowing off steam and gaining strength boxing in his home gym. He attributes good health and vaccination status to his successful weathering of the COVID-19 virus last year.