

Sustainability Hero



April 2023



Barbara F. Rogers, PhD Committee Member, Township of Cranbury (Middlesex County)

For over 20 years, Dr. Barbara Rogers has served in local government for the Township of Cranbury--a small town in Middlesex County with 3,800+ residents. She was a member of the [Cranbury Environmental Commission](#) for 16 years and was chair for six years. In 2019, Barbara ran for town council on a sustainability platform and was elected to the Cranbury Township Committee. She was the Cranbury Township mayor in 2022 and was reelected to the Township Committee for a second term in 2022.

Smart and passionate about her work, Barbara is a stand-out New Jersey leader demonstrating that sustainability platforms make for good politics and vibrant communities. With a Ph.D. in Environmental Science from Rutgers University, Barbara combines expertise with experience for what she says is a labor of love. "Sustainability is important to Cranbury," Barbara said. "Who doesn't want clean water, clean air, a clean environment, a thriving economy, a walkable community, and one that is resilient to climate change and flooding? My goal is to help our entire town embrace sustainability - living for today, but not borrowing from tomorrow."

Under Barbara's leadership, Cranbury Township achieved Sustainable Jersey bronze-level certification in 2013, 2016 and 2019 and silver-level certification in 2022. The sustainability actions are documented in the [2022 Sustainable Jersey Certification Report for the Township of Cranbury](#). "Sustainable Jersey does a great job educating municipal officials about what sustainability actions are possible. When we first got started, the Environmental Commission met and, as a group, we took each one of the Sustainable Jersey categories and cross-referenced it and vetted it with the master plan, ordinances and codes in Cranbury. It matched up nicely," Barbara said.

Barbara is the Township Committee's liaison to the Cranbury Board of Education, Environmental Commission and the Shade Tree Commission. She has served four years on the [Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions](#) Board and has been on its Executive Committee for the last two years. When she was mayor, Cranbury earned the 2021 New Jersey Healthy Town Up-and-Coming award from the statewide [Mayors Wellness Campaign](#).



"Cranbury has been described as one town with many personalities," said Barbara. "I like this description because we have historic buildings, farmland, open space, a dynamic downtown and multinational corporations. And after a decade of talking about sustainability issues in Cranbury, we have moved past the eye rolling phase and have evolved our work so that these issues are just part of the conversation and imbedded in our planning documents."

Green Building and Sustainability Element: Cranbury's Master Plan includes a Green Building and Sustainability Element which was reaffirmed in the [2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report for the Township of Cranbury](#). The Green Building and Environmental Sustainability Element serves as an action plan for the Cranbury Environmental Commission. Barbara said, "It addresses energy, land use, transportation and waste. Including our sustainability actions in the Master Plan has been extremely useful to the community and the staff who want to get these actions done. I was able to move many of my sustainability initiatives forward by advocating for their inclusion in the 2010 Master Plan Green Building and Sustainability Element. And now, the 2019 Master Plan Reexamination helps us focus on the actions to implement next." Cranbury

Township received 10 Sustainable Jersey certification points for completing the action: [Green Building and Environmental Sustainability Element](#).

Mayor's Walk to School: Cranbury participates in the [New Jersey Safe Routes to School Program](#) and earned silver-level recognition in 2020. The program partners with schools and communities to prioritize and implement opportunities for people to walk, bike or travel by other wheeled devices. Barbara said she loved leading a Mayor's Walk to School event at which she walked with a group of students joined by school administrators, police representatives and other Cranbury leaders. Barbara explained, "Driving kids to school by private vehicle and idling in the school vicinity contributes to traffic congestion and air pollution near the school. Bicycling and walking to school can have a positive mental and physical impact on the health of youth and helps them arrive at school ready to learn." In addition, 10 crossing guards completed Crossing Guard Training conducted by the Cranbury Police. At the upcoming walk, on April 25, 2023, the [Cranbury Historical Preservation Society](#) will have an historic artifacts table in front of Memorial Park for students to see as they walk to school with the mayor. Cranbury Township received 10 Sustainable Jersey certification points after completing the action: [Safe Routes to School](#).



Farmland Preservation: Approximately 64% (more than 2,000 acres) of agricultural land in Cranbury Township is designated as permanently preserved farmland. Nearly all (83%) of Cranbury's preserved farmland is actively farmed. As a member of the Environmental Commission and now as a Township Committee member, Barbara has championed farmland preservation in Cranbury Township, and in 2021, Barbara was appointed as a voting member of the [Middlesex County Agricultural Development Board](#). Cranbury's Master Plan includes a Farmland Preservation element which is consistent with regional goals described in the [Middlesex County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan](#). To set aside agricultural land, Cranbury Township uses proactive municipal planning and zoning approaches including the purchase of development rights under the [Farmland Preservation Program](#) of the [New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee](#), promotion of lot averaged development patterns and the acquisition of agricultural properties. In collaboration with the Middlesex County Agricultural Development Board, Cranbury has established an Agricultural Development Area and a plan for its preservation as farmland. The Township Farmland Preservation Plan includes a list of properties eligible for farmland preservation and a proposed strategy to place them under agricultural zoning. The Township adopted a Right to Farm ordinance to help farmers stay on agriculturally valuable land. Cranbury Township received 10 Sustainable Jersey certification points after completing the action: [Farmland Preservation Plans](#).



Flood Resiliency: Improving Cranbury's flood resiliency and stormwater infrastructure is an important issue for Barbara. She serves on the Cranbury Township Committee's Flood Resiliency Subcommittee and she participated in the Southern Middlesex County Flood Mitigation and Resiliency Plan that recently received a federal government grant. "Storms have become more frequent and intense due to climate change which has caused increased flooding in Cranbury and other towns throughout New Jersey," Barbara said. "I worked with the township to identify our flood prone areas and provided a list to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help update outdated federal flood maps." She contends that waterways do not stop at Cranbury's boundaries and flood resiliency requires working with surrounding municipalities, so she is working on a regional/watershed approach to flooding. Additionally, Barbara is working to support the inland flood protection rules proposed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection that would prevent new development in flood prone areas and strengthen our state's stormwater mitigation rules.

Yearly Cranbury Stream Cleanup: The Cranbury Environmental Commission promotes and participates in [The Watershed Institute's](#) yearly stream cleanup. The 15th Annual Stream Cleanup event is taking place in Cranbury on April 22, 2023. Volunteers help remove trash from areas around local streams. Over the years, 760 volunteers have collected about 8,300 pounds of trash. Register for the Cranbury event [here](#).

Collaboration with Cranbury Public School: Barbara and Cranbury Environmental Commission Member Theresa Vaccaro help with sustainability initiatives in Cranbury Public School. In 2021, Theresa led the effort as Cranbury School (pre-

K-8) attained silver-level certification from [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#). The Environmental Commission provided the school with two rain barrels for their garden which led to the school applying for, and receiving, a \$2,000 [Sustainable Jersey for Schools grant](#) funded by the PSEG Foundation for the purchase of aeroponics gardening equipment to start an after-school garden club. The program has grown over the years and a new aquaponics system, which includes a 600-gallon fish tank and 20 Koi fish, was installed after a donation from the Cranbury Education Foundation. The school is working with Skeets Pantry and Farmers Against Hunger to share the produce to pantries in the area. The Koi fish are helping grow 100 plants in the deep water rafts and 250 seedlings are in constant rotation on top.



Bicycle Network Plan: The [Cranbury Township Bicycle Network Plan](#) was completed in 2021. Barbara said, “Our plan is great. I carry it with me wherever I go. I wave it when I talk with residents, county and state professionals, and with our staff to help keep these projects moving forward. I want to better connect the downtown with other neighborhoods by implementing the bike network plan. It will guide our road improvements and help us apply for grant funding.” The Township of Cranbury participated in the [North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority Complete Streets Technical Assistance \(CSTA\) Program](#) in 2020. The CSTA Program selected eight municipalities to receive up to \$10,000 in technical assistance to advance complete streets projects. Sustainable Jersey and the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University provided the technical assistance. The Cranbury Township Bicycle Network Plan identifies several potential infrastructure improvements to create safe and attractive bicycle facilities along nine important corridors in Cranbury. To develop these recommendations, the study team engaged municipal stakeholders in a collaborative process to identify existing conditions that pose obstacles to safe bicycle travel and develop practical solutions that enhance safety for all roadway users. Cranbury’s mix of rural roads and roads with freight cargo make it unique and this plan provides Cranbury a pathway forward to become more bike and pedestrian friendly. The Township of Cranbury received 10 Sustainable Jersey certification points after completing the action: [Bicycle and Pedestrian Audits](#).

Tour de Cranbury: On May 7, 2023, Cranbury will be hosting [Tour de Cranbury](#), a community biking event. The 10-mile route is for experienced riders; it travels through the scenic village and farms of Cranbury on open roads. A shorter 3.5-mile route is for riders of all skill levels and goes from Village Park to Millstone Park along residential roads. The Trikes Ride is a short ride, safe for anyone, starting and ending at Cranbury-Millstone Park. “In addition to being a fun event, we hope that the ride shows the important link between our Village, our history and our agriculture. On this same day we will also have a celebration at our historic 1713 East Jersey Cottage,” explained Barbara. The [Cranbury Colonial Fair & Spring Picnic](#) on May 7, 2023 will take place at the 1713 House, one of the oldest houses in New Jersey that was donated to [Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society](#).



Environmental Resource Inventory: Cranbury Township used a [Sustainable Jersey grant](#), funded by the PSEG Foundation, to update its Environmental Resource Inventory. The [Cranbury Township Environmental Resource Inventory](#) is a comprehensive document with over 30 maps depicting key climate, geologic, soils, water resources, wetlands and more. “It’s a planning tool to help Cranbury Township balance the ongoing development within the Township while protecting and enhancing the sensitive environmental resources,” said Barbara. The document identifies and describes the natural resources, cultural conditions and environmental features within the Township and provides descriptions of these resources, their sensitivity and limitations for development as well as the suggested measures for protecting sensitive resources. Cranbury Township received 20 Sustainable Jersey certification points after completing the action: [Natural Resources Inventory](#).

Age Friendly Community Design Resolution: In 2022, the Cranbury Township Committee passed the [Resolution for an Age Friendly Community Design](#), which supports the idea that a sustainable community is one that is designed for all ages. “Cranbury already has many amenities that support the older population, and the Township Committee realizes older people need to be able to easily use the built environment. We want to implement community design factors that enable older residents to achieve home security, independent mobility and meaningful social engagement,” said Barbara. The Township of Cranbury received five Sustainable Jersey certification points for completing a part of the action: [Community Design for All Ages](#) and is one of only two municipalities in New Jersey to receive points under this action.

More about Barbara: Barbara has lived in Cranbury for 25 years. She and her husband Bob raised their three children—William, Ginny and Ally—in Cranbury. In her free time, Barbara enjoys gardening, traveling, playing tennis, and spending time with her neighbors and friends in the outdoors