

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

June 2020



Nancy Facey-Blackwood

Chair, Red Bank Environmental Commission
(Monmouth County)

Red Bank Borough, located on the southern bank of the Navesink River, is one of only three municipalities in Monmouth County that are certified with Sustainable Jersey at the silver-level. This achievement was accomplished thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers, elected officials and borough staff, presently led by Nancy Blackwood who is the chair of the Red Bank Environmental Commission (RBEC).

When Nancy was first invited to join the environmental commission and green team, she was tasked with handling the complete streets Sustainable Jersey actions. Although having no previous experience in this area, as a retired systems analyst, Nancy is a problem solver who listens and learns quickly. She helped update the complete streets policy and get funding for projects that have resulted in innovative solutions for Red Bank. Ziad Andrew Shehady, the Business Administrator for the Borough of Red Bank said, “Nancy has been a tireless advocate for complete streets in Red Bank. Her leadership with our Environmental Commission is admirable and we are grateful to have such a great partner on our team.” In 2019, the Red Bank Pedestrian Safety Demonstration Project, spearheaded by Nancy, won a Monmouth County Planning Board Merit Award in recognition of outstanding partnership project to increase pedestrian safety and traffic calming.

Red Bank Councilperson Kate Triggiano added, “Nancy lives an eco-conscious life every day and brings her commitment to sustainability to lead our Environmental Commission team. From tactical urbanism to solar projects, Nancy’s leadership moves us towards a better Red Bank. Thank you to Sustainable Jersey for awarding Nancy this much deserved recognition.”

Red Bank Borough - Sustainable Jersey Silver-Certified

The Red Bank Environmental Commission (RBEC) was established in 1990 and is comprised of Red Bank residents appointed by the mayor. RBEC advises the mayor, Borough Council, borough administrator and municipal department heads on environmental issues that may affect the natural resources and inhabitants of the community, including but not limited to solid waste management and recycling, energy conservation and renewable energy, storm water management, preservation and use of parks and open spaces, clean water water resources and protection of flora, fauna, soil and landscape throughout the borough. Additionally, the commission reviews and comments on the development applications for the Red Bank’s Planning and Zoning Boards.



RBEC is committed to sustainability in the community and continues to develop and implement programs that will conserve energy, preserve natural resources and property, improve the health and well being of citizens and municipal employees, and produce long-term cost savings. To assist with their sustainable efforts, RBEC created a green team in 2009 and a creative team in 2017. These groups collaborate with the borough departments, boards, commissions and committees for a more sustainable future for residents. Since 2009, RBEC has participated in Sustainable Jersey and

maintained a bronze-level status for the five-years and in 2018, achieved silver-level certification. For more details, read the complete [Red Bank Sustainable Jersey Certification Report](#).

Red Bank Pedestrian Safety Demonstration Project: Tactical Urbanism

As a champion for complete streets, Nancy managed a team to update the Red Bank Borough [Complete Streets Policy](#) in 2018. Complete streets are streets designed for all users, all modes of transportation and all ability levels. They balance the needs of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, emergency responders and goods movement based on the local context. The update served as an important first step toward implementation of complete streets, as it defines the meaning of complete streets, establishes goals and lays out the ways in which the municipality will accomplish the goals. In addition to adopting a complete streets policy, Red Bank completed a NJ Transit Bike-Ped Access study in 2018.

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority partners with Sustainable Jersey, the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University and Together North Jersey on the [Complete Streets Technical Assistance Program](#) to provide planning level technical assistance services to municipalities for a specific project related to advancing a complete streets initiative in their communities. In 2019, the Borough of Red Bank was one of nine municipalities selected through the competitive grant program to receive up to \$10,000 in technical assistance to support the Borough's efforts to advance or implement complete streets.

Red Bank sought assistance in implementing a demonstration project for the intersection of Drs. James Parker Boulevard and South Bridge Avenue which is an important connection between Red Bank's nearby residential areas, key community organizations, the downtown and train station. The project design used tactical urbanism, a short-term action for a long-term change, along with the design elements to be used that are not permanent and can be modified with ease. A mural was painted in the middle of the intersection in anticipation that it would catch motorists' attention and cause them to slow down, creating a positive distraction.

In addition to the street designs, the project team developed outreach materials to acquaint community members with complete streets and design project goals. The public outreach materials explained the concept of design projects, why they are important and how members of the community can participate. The Borough of Red Bank distributed outreach materials through existing communication channels, including the municipal website, public information boards, contacts with local schools and businesses and during local events. Posters were also displayed at intersections along the study corridor announcing the demonstration project.

To learn more about this project, read: [2019 Pedestrian Safety Demonstration Project Borough of Red Bank](#). This report summarizes the process and provides recommendations for additional safety improvements. Nancy said, "The borough



plans to paint a new, more permanent design at the intersection in the future.” She added, “Some of the overall benefits of this project are the low cost and ability to test the effectiveness of the traffic calming measure before making permanent and costly modifications.” Eventually, plastic soft-hit bollards are expected to replace traffic cones placed at all four corners to keep vehicles from parking there and blocking sightlines. In 2019, this project won a Monmouth County Planning Board Merit Award in recognition of outstanding partnership project to increase pedestrian safety and traffic calming.

Green Business Recognition Program

In 2017, the Borough initiated the voluntary [Red Bank Green Business Program](#) (GBRP). Local businesses in compliance with the outlined criteria for green operations are recognized by the municipality, listed on the borough website and permitted to display both physical and digital signage indicating participation. The Borough adopted the criteria established by the New Jersey Sustainable Business Registry Program (NJSBR), which includes registration of participating businesses with the NJSBR. Participation in the program is encouraged by the municipality in conjunction with local business organizations. Nancy said, “The long-term goal is for this program to be a part of the ecological solution. One where community members, businesses and government all participate in an awareness of each of our impacts on the environment. We feel we are a long way from there, but the baby steps are to get the local business community invested in “going green”. We feel that this registration program is a way to build relationships not only with the business community, but also those within that may be interested in going green but didn’t feel like they had an outlet before.”



Water Refill Stations at Local Parks

In 2018, Red Bank Borough received a \$10,000 Sustainable Jersey grant funded by PSEG Foundation for a project called: Access to Clean Water. The Borough supported a plastic reduction education initiative by installing water bottle refilling stations at different parks in order to use data from them to make informed future planning decisions. This photo is from a ribbon cutting at Johnny Jazz Park. The Red Bank Borough Department of Public Works did the installation and Bobby Doc Holiday provided the art at the water refill station. The project was made possible by the Environmental Commission members headed by Pat Pinto, Kate Triggiano and Nancy. The artwork was done by Kate Okeson and Michael Paul Raspanti.



More About Nancy

Nancy was born in New York and grew up on the island of Jamaica. She was invited to participate in the Red Bank Environmental Commission shortly after she moved to town; she was installing solar on her home’s roof which seemed like a good indicator that she would be interested in joining the group. Nancy was a senior systems analyst for Verizon, AT&T and EMC and is currently homeschooling a high schooler. She is the household program manager and network administrator. She has a BA in Economics from Hunter College. Nancy lives with her two children, her gardening-expert husband Phil who is also an enterprise architect for AT&T, and their dog Scout. She also lives with her 92-year-old mother who continues to ride her mobility scooter around town. Her home is nearly fossil-free, with solar panels and an electric car. Nancy concluded, “My focus is sustainability and I try to live with preservation of our resources in mind, because the Earth will survive the future, but we cannot say the same thing for humanity if we do not make major changes. I hope to inspire others and enact projects that get Red Bank moving in the right direction.”