

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

February 2021



Christopher G. Mazauskas

Co-Founder, Edison Green Team

Resource Development Officer, Edison Township

For over 13 years, Christopher Mazauskas served the people of Edison Township as a grant writer, resource development officer and sustainability champion. Chris co-founded the Edison Sustainable Jersey Green Team and was responsible for Edison Township being consecutively certified with Sustainable Jersey since 2009, the first year of the program. He was a dedicated environmentalist and sustainability leader. On December 29, 2020, Chris lost his fight with COVID-19. Chris' contributions in Edison Township are significant to moving sustainability forward for the municipality. In addition to his professional achievements, Chris was an outstanding person; the Sustainable Jersey staff are fortunate to have known him and will miss his optimistic enthusiasm, friendly personality and laughter.

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, in his [1/6/21 Coronavirus briefing](#), said, "Chris was a community advocate known for handing out hundreds of saplings to residents to commemorate Earth Day. He served on numerous boards and commissions, including the New Jersey Housing Authority. All who met Chris and immediately recognized that behind the gentle wit and warm spirit was a true renaissance man who enjoyed learning about any topic. He loved to laugh and travel with his family and share stories of his travels with his friends and colleagues. We thank Chris for his years of service to the people and Township of Edison. Surely Edison is a better place because of his work, and has many more trees that will grow as a lasting legacy of his service."

Chris explained to Sustainable Jersey his personal connection to sustainability in relation to a greenhouse he helped secure the funding for; he said, "My father was a first generation Lithuanian-American who was raised on a farm near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. When I was growing up in Irvington, he worked hard as a warehouseman and truck driver for Budweiser in Newark. We always had a big garden and he instilled in me the importance of tending the yield. I want the students to experience what I had growing up--a connection to and appreciation of home-grown vegetables, herbs and fruit."



Edison Township Sustainable Jersey Certified Since 2009

Edison Township has been certified with Sustainable Jersey since 2009. The Edison Township Sustainable Jersey Green Team, Edison Clean Communities, [Edison Greenways Group](#), [Edison Township Environmental Commission](#) and sustainability-based organizations work together on the sustainable actions. Chris served as the co-chair of the green

team with his partner in sustainable activities, Jay Elliot, the director of the Edison Department of Health and Human Services.

Venus Majeski of the [New Jersey Institute for Disabilities](#) has known Chris for nearly four decades, she said, “Chris was someone who embraced life and welcomed opportunities to enhance his community. When Chris embarked on gaining Sustainable Jersey certification for Edison Township, he was “all in” and he reached out to all of his colleagues, friends and acquaintances to help make it happen. The distinction was a great source of pride because he recognized the value of the process. Conversations with Chris were always stimulating- medieval literature, Broadway shows, Christian mystics and the Polish diaspora were just a few of the topics that could arise! Chris was erudite and well-read; a gentleman and a gentle man and we are all better for having known him.”

The Edison Township Green Team supports a full schedule of activities, including: an annual Earth Day celebration, environmental issue workshops, anti-litter and recycling programs for the schools, support of the Middlesex/Edison Greenway, eco-tours throughout the Edison/Greater Edison area and participation in the Sustainable Jersey Middlesex County Hub. Chris managed the Sustainable Jersey certification application; you can review all of the sustainability actions completed by the Township of Edison in the [2020 Edison Township Certification Report](#).

Over \$50,000 in Sustainable Jersey Grants for Edison Township

Under Chris’ leadership, Edison Township secured over \$50,000 in Sustainable Jersey grants. The first grant for \$20,000, funded by the PSEG Foundation, helped to pay for a greenhouse at John P. Stephens High School and, most recently in 2019, Edison Township received a \$30,000 Sustainable Jersey grant funded by the Gardiner Environmental Fund for a photovoltaic solar energy system and portable power generator. Overall as a grant writer and resource development officer, Chris secured millions of dollars for the township.



Edison Township Energy Efficiency Accomplishments

Since 2007, the Township of Edison has actively taken advantage of incentives offered by [New Jersey’s Clean Energy Program](#) and [PSEG’s](#) Direct Install Program. Energy efficiency upgrades include rooftop heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) units and economizers, chiller replacement and lighting upgrades on municipal buildings and libraries. The Edison Municipal Animal Shelter has also benefitted from a number of upgrades including heat pump air conditioning and an onsite solar thermal (hot water) system.

Edison Township’s fleet management practices include the use of telematics which are small electronic devices that track vehicle usage. Edison has been able to reduce the total number of vehicles in the non-public safety fleet by about 25 percent, streamline preventive maintenance for fleet vehicles and optimize routes for snow management resulting in approximately 20 percent reduction in staff hours and 35 percent reduction in salt and brine use.

John P. Stephens High School Greenhouse

Chris collaborated with John P. Stephens High School Assistant Principal Meredith Quick to write grants and develop a coalition of partners for a school greenhouse. The project, funded through events, grants and donations, was strengthened when Edison Township partnered with the Edison Township Public School District. The 30' by 60' greenhouse was constructed with the support and participation of teachers, school administrators, school district and township staff, residents, students, funders and community group members. The completed greenhouse has five raised growing beds including one that meets ADA accessibility needs. It is equipped with running water, electricity, a hydroponics system and drip irrigation. Outside the greenhouse, an additional eight growing beds support organic vegetables, spices and flowers in the growing season.



New Jersey Smart Workplaces Awards Program

For the ninth consecutive year, the Township of Edison was awarded Platinum Status for its participation in the New Jersey Smart Workplaces Awards Program by Keep Middlesex Moving. Chris and the green team actively support programs that help alleviate traffic congestion and improve air quality by assisting commuters. Some of the achievements for which Edison Township received this award are the establishment and continued maintenance of one of the largest municipal fleets of hybrid vehicles in New Jersey; the establishment and continued maintenance of the Edison Public Transportation Information Site; and continued support of the Edison Senior Transportation Bus Services for Edison senior and challenged adult residents.



Participation in the New Jersey Tree Recovery Campaign

From 2017-2019, the Edison Green Team facilitated the distribution of 3,000+ free tree saplings as part of the New Jersey Tree Restoration Program managed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Forest Service. Trees saplings were given to residents and visitors at green team sustainability events. The goal of the tree recovery campaign is to distribute over 500,000 tree seedlings to New Jersey residents over the course of five years. The campaign is a public-private effort among the New Jersey Forest Service, the New Jersey Forest Service Nursery, Arbor Day Foundation, New Jersey Soil Conservation Districts, Sustainable Jersey, Verizon, BJ's Wholesale Club and FedEx.



Edison Earth Day Celebration

For nine years, the Edison Township Environmental Commission, Edison Clean Communities Program and Edison Sustainable Jersey Green Team, have held an annual Edison Earth Day Celebration with a free public event at the Oak Tree Pond Park. In 2019, the annual Edison Earth Day Celebration was reinvented as the Edison Green Fair; the event was held in conjunction with the 2019 Edison Family Day.



Contributions to Honor Chris's Memory

In lieu of flowers, Chris's family would greatly appreciate that contributions be made to [Hands of Hope](#) or [Better Community Housing of Trenton, Inc.](#) in his memory.