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Environmental Commission Report: Cranford Is 'Greener'

Local environmentalists' 2011 report touts success of anti-idling campaign, "My Green Cranford", other programs.

By [Toniann Antonelli](#) | [Email the author](#) | February 22, 2012

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Cranford is getting "greener" every day, and according to a report released by the Environmental Commission, the efforts have just begun.

The Cranford Environmental Commission recently released its Annual Report for 2011. The report lists many of the initiatives that the organization and the business community have completed in the past year.

"We are very proud of our accomplishments this year, believing that, in a small way, they have enhanced the quality of life and the environment in Cranford. We are very grateful for the support of the Township Committee, in particular our liaison, Ed O'Malley," Commission Chairman Nelson Dittmar said.

The principal projects in 2011 were the Green Business program, the Anti-idling campaign, the creation of a website called [My Green Cranford](#), and the Clean Energy Program. The website serves as a resource guide for residents for issues relating to the environment, energy-savings ideas, and environmental events. There is a resource page with links to helpful green websites.

Visitors have the option to sign up for the e-mail newsletter, which offers monthly tips and news.

According to the annual report, Cranford was certified as a Sustainable Community in 2010 by Sustainable Jersey, a statewide program that encourages communities that want to go green to pursue local initiatives and actions that will control costs and save money. So far, more than 350 communities in New Jersey have registered for the program, of which only 96 have been certified.

"Working with The Green Team, we continued some of these programs, including the Green Business recognition program, which recognizes businesses for taking actions that benefit the environment while being economically beneficial. Twenty businesses were certified as being green and received certificates of recognition from the mayor," Dittmar said. "We also offered to residents plots in the Community Gardens at Walnut Avenue School."

According to the annual report, the commission also joined the fight against the proposed [Birchwood Avenue](#) development project. The group submitted a letter to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection on Dec. 21 concerning an application for a flood hazard area permit by the developer, S. Hekemian Group, to construct 360 apartment units in a flood-proned area on Birchwood Avenue.

The commission also took steps to raise awareness about the environmental dangers of idling vehicles, Dittmar said.

"To raise resident awareness about New Jersey's vehicle anti-idling law and the health dangers of idling, we purchased 52 signs urging residents to turn off their vehicle engines when standing. The signs were around town, including at all schools," the chairman said.

Another initiative that the Environmental Commission took on last year involved the Clean Energy Program. This program encourages residents to take actions to save energy such as switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs and purchasing ENERGY STAR qualified products. During the year, residents took the Change The World, Start with ENERGY STAR pledge at www.energystarcranford.2ya.com.

Public buildings in the township also benefitted from the Environmental Commission's efforts in 2011, Dittmar explained.

"As part of the Sustainable Jersey program, we obtained a grant for an energy audit of the [Community Center](#) in 2010. During the year, one of the recommendations of the audit report to install light and motion sensors in the hallways and meeting rooms was implemented," Dittmar said.

The commission also met with Superintendent of Schools Gayle Carrick and representatives of the school district to discuss the possibility of implementing a townwide composting program.

"As a result, 12 55-gallon composters were built and placed at the schools. Students are learning about the appropriate kitchen waste to compost," the chairman added.

In the fall, the commission turned it's attention to leaf removal, urging residents to forgo the use of powered leaf blowers and rake leaves on two designated Saturdays. The Rake For The Planet program was endorsed in a resolution by the Township Committee.

The chairman said the commission was pleased with the efforts of residents and businesses in 2011 and is hoping to continue working toward a greener Cranford in the coming year.

"I am looking forward to continuing many of these programs in 2012 and starting new ones. We make presentations to community groups about the Clean Energy Program and energy-saving ideas," Dittmar said.

Anyone interested in joining the commission can email the chairman at candndittmar@cs.com. To read the full annual report, visit the website at www.mygreencranford.com.

What "green" initiatives would you like to see more of in 2012?

The use of energy efficient lighting in all public buildings.

Getting more businesses certified as Green Businesses.

Stricter local ordinances on recycling.

More initiatives in the school district.

Total votes: **8**

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