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Lawrence to create 'green map' of community

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By **Samantha Costa/The Times**
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LAWRENCE — Volunteers in Lawrence have begun developing a new, interactive online map this month, which will highlight the township's sustainable-living efforts.

The Green Maps System serves 776 communities in 60 countries — 14 of them in New Jersey — mapping “green” resources for residents. It’s best described as a Google Map gone green, displaying community parks, trails, open spaces, and sustainability projects.

Once the map is live, community members will be able to add content, like pictures, ratings and tips, and share it on social-networking sites like Facebook and Twitter.

“If you’re a mother, you’re going to want to know if little kids can ride their bike on the trail and be safe,” said Donna Drewes, co-director of the Institute for Sustainability Planning & Governance at The College of New Jersey.



Solar Panels

Times File Photo

Or, for example, if you’re looking for something as simple as a water fountain or parking, Drewes said, it will be available on the map.

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"These can be really robust maps," Drewes said.

Wendy Brawer, founding director of Green Maps System, said new cities are jumping on board every day.

"When people get together, it really can accelerate the project greatly. I'm hoping more people get involved," Brawer said.

Last year, Lawrence earned a grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, in collaboration with Montgomery, Hillsborough and Princeton townships, which were grouped under the Central Jersey Team name.

The grant allows for the training of instructors and provides resources and technical support to run a green map for each municipality.

"Sustainable" has become a watchword for Lawrence — a township that boasts three consecutive Bronze certifications from the nonprofit Sustainable Jersey program, solar panels on each of its public school rooftops, and other green initiatives.

"We're all doing different things, and need to learn from a good model," Brawer said. Drewes' center at TCNJ acts as an academic partner that manages Sustainable Jersey programs.

Drewes said teams, in order to get the grant, are evaluated their leadership, capacity, resources and focus on sustainability.

"And Lawrence definitely has that," Drewes said.

Sustainable Lawrence's Executive Director, Tahirih Smith, said their goal is to use green mapmaking in the school district as part of a new sustainability curriculum.

Workshops are being conducted this year at various locations to assign different content for the maps. On Jan. 25, members of the Lawrence Green Team met to offer suggestions. So far, Smith said, features such as open space, bike trails, schools, cemeteries, VFW posts, the Lawrence Nature Center, gardens, the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail, solar and geothermal projects and farms have been slated to appear on the map.

Anyone can access their green map by going to greenmap.org, or type "Green Map" on a smart phone browser.

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