

# CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
April 13, 2011

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## ***Mayor Healy Announces “365 Days of Green” Campaign to Celebrate Earth Day Everyday*** ***Mayor Discusses the City’s Green Initiatives and Sustainable Jersey Application***

**JERSEY CITY** – In honor of Earth Day, **Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy** and city officials announced today the city’s **“365 Days of Green”** campaign which will promote green and sustainable living throughout the year.

“We believe that the best way to lead is by example and that is why we are launching this **“365 Days of Green”** campaign to encourage our residents and local businesses to adopt ways of sustainable living,” said **Mayor Healy**. “Every person can make a difference every day, and we are partnering not only with local businesses, but also community groups, to create more opportunities for Jersey City residents to live green.”

In 2009, the Mayor introduced and the City Council adopted a set of four green ordinances that would lead Jersey City to be named one of the top green cities by MSN City Guides. The ordinances call for the City to purchase green, to use energy-efficient vehicles, to build green municipal buildings and to offer incentives to developers who build green. Recently, Mayor Healy signed a green executive order creating a Green Committee to oversee the implementation of these ordinances and to study ways the city can implement other green initiatives.

Mayor Healy also has recently reconstituted the city’s Environmental Commission, whose mission is to create environmental awareness, understanding and appreciation in order to protect and sustain our city’s natural resources. The Environmental Commission, with seven members, will actively advocate for the long-term protection of Jersey City’s natural resources and will be an environmental education

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source for all residents. The Commission is now fully appointed, and the group will begin meeting on a regular basis with some short-term goals that include conducting a Natural Resources Inventory, cataloging the Adopt-A-Lot sites, and creating a storm water management manual.

“Reconstituting the Environmental Commission was a goal that we set and I am pleased to announce we have met that goal,” said **Mayor Healy**. “Not only will there be representation on this board from around the city, but we also were thorough in our search and sought candidates with strong qualifications and credentials.”

In addition to the Green Committee, the city has a Green Task Force that is developing a number of green programs to enhance sustainability in the city. Many of these green initiatives will assist the city in its application for Sustainable Jersey designation this year. The Sustainable Jersey program helps municipalities improve efficiency, cut waste and stimulate their local economies. Registered municipalities get special priority access and notification of incentives and grants, and are eligible for the Sustainable Jersey Small Grant Program which funds \$220,000 worth of sustainable projects annually across New Jersey.

- **Energy Audit of Municipal Buildings:**

The City has issued an RFP and awarded a contract to EMG, a state-approved consultant to assess current energy usage and costs, identify, analyze and recommend energy efficiency measures, renewable energy systems and strategies for the purchase of energy for some 25 City-owned buildings as part of an Energy Savings Improvement Program (ESIP). The overall goals are to reduce the City’s energy consumption, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, install in key facilities alternate energy sources and energy savings improvements where feasible that will reduce energy usage and energy costs, and prepare guidelines on basic behavioral changes that can contribute to overall energy savings in City-owned buildings and facilities.

- **Adopt-A-Lot Program:**

The City has amended its Adopt-A-Lot program to encourage the creation of community gardens in once blighted vacant lots and in underused park lands. The City has also expanded the lease terms from one to two years, and through a partnership with City Green, will be offering an educational component. We are now working on a list of city-owned sites that will be suitable for gardening (this includes vacant and park land). We will be working with our local Universities and using Green Map to also help finish this list.

- **Urban Agriculture:**

The JCRA has dedicated land at the HUB for two (2) hydroponic greenhouses that will be operated by Garden State Urban Farms. The greenhouses will be used as an employment training program for the Friends of Lifers. Most of the food that is grown at the greenhouse

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will be provided directly to local food pantries and soup kitchens, and some will be distributed by the Jersey City Food Coop's Mobile Farmers Market – which will target areas designated as Food Deserts. The greenhouses will also be used as educational tools for local school to come and learn about hydroponic farming.

- **Farmer's Markets:**

The City is working to help start a Farmers Market in the Heights, where there currently is none. This market will house two tables – one for our community gardeners to sell at and the other for our school-based environmental clubs. Jersey City is the first municipality in the state to utilize new state legislation that permits growers on municipal land under five (5) acres to sell their food, tax exempt. Prior to this legislation, one could not sell such produce unless it was grown on land over five (5) acres, a clear obstacle to Urban Agriculture.

- **Buy Fresh, Buy Local:**

The City is currently in the process of starting a Buy Fresh, Buy Local chapter in Jersey City. We will be the ONLY municipality in New Jersey to host one, as the only other chapter is a regional one. This will also provide a bridge for local restaurants to buy local food, and be able to do so at a wholesale rate – making it affordable to them and making them more attractive to a certain clientele. Additionally, we are taking this same relationship and using it with local food banks – they will be able to purchase and get leftovers of fresh local produce to use in their pantries and kitchens. We will also be reaching out to local schools and hospitals to participate in this program.

- **Educational Outreach:**

City Green has started learning gardens in seven (7) schools this year, and will be starting Environmental Education Clubs in each of those schools. Students who participate in those clubs will then be able to participate in the City's First Science Sustainability Fair. NJCU's Urban Environmental Science program is partnering with the City Planning Division and the Jersey City Food Coop to perform an extensive Food Insecurity/Food Access Study for Jersey City. NJCU will also be studying the Urban Agriculture Initiative in Jersey City as a multi-discipline study. The Washington Park Association will be launching their Permaculture Learning Garden & Apprenticeship Program in May, which was recently awarded funding by the Dodge Foundation.

- **Partnering to Reduce the Use of Plastic Bags:**

The City has been meeting with Food Council, the Chemistry Council and local supermarkets and retailers to develop a plan to better promote and raise awareness about reusable shopping bags and the recycling of plastic bags and plastic wraps. The City will launch a program later this spring to identify local merchants who will collect plastic bags for recycling and a multi-faceted marketing program to reusable shopping bags.

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- **Mapping/Technological Tie-In:**

The City is partnering with “Green Map,” a user-friendly, web-based mapping program that will store data and provide the public a platform and network for Adopt-A-Lot program and other green businesses and initiatives citywide. All Adopt-A-Lot participants will be required to upload current photos and event information into Green Map.

- **Green Loans:**

The City, through the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency, has launched a “green loan” program known as LEAF (Loan Energy Assistance Fund) which offers loans up to \$75,000 at 2.5 percent interest rate to be repaid over a maximum period of 10 years. The program is open to residential, commercial and industrial properties and eligible projects include, but are not limited to, building exterior weatherization, building insulation, lighting upgrades, heating and air conditioning replacements and improvements to energy control systems. The loan program is made possible through EECBG.

- **Energy Efficient Solar Water Heater Rebate Program:**

The City, through the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency, will be offering residents and business the opportunity to receive rebates for the installation of high-efficiency/solar hot water units. The program is expected to be launched later this spring.

“Jersey City already has a community that understands sustainability and living green, but we believe that these programs will help our residents and business owners to further incorporate green practices into their daily lives and also reach more people,” said **Mayor Healy**. “By making green living more accessible, we are not only improving our present day quality of life, but we are also protecting our city for future generations.”

**All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.///**