



Strategic Plan

2026 -

Mission

Sustain SJ advocates for environmental stewardship, responsible development and local government that works for the people it represents by encouraging citizen involvement and mobilization through information, engagement and civic activism. Sustain SJ works to facilitate the deliberate action and participation of private citizens, driven by personal conviction and community concerns, in efforts to improve, influence and advocate for change within South Jersey.

Vision

Sustain SJ envisions a South Jersey where elected officials align with engaged residents and shape transparent, accountable local government, environmental resources are protected and the community has the civic infrastructure and power to advocate for a more equitable and sustainable future.

In order to accomplish the mission and vision, this strategic plan positions Sustain SJ to become:

- Lead environmental and civic accountability organization in the South Jersey area
- A respected regional watchdog on development and infrastructure
- A policy and electoral influence operation capable of shaping local government for a more equitable, people-centered future

Core Values

True representation: Local government must reflect the informed will, interests, goals and long-term wellbeing of the people it serves over priorities of corporations, businesses, political insiders or unelected networks of influence

- Sustain SJ exists to strengthen democratic participation and ensure communities have a real voice in local government.

Environmental Stewardship: Clean air, safe drinking water, healthy farmlands, forests and public health are human rights.

- Sustain SJ exists to advocate for responsible development, protect the area's environmental resources and cultivate a broader public understanding that environmental stewardship is a collective responsibility shared across individuals, institutions, communities and generations

Transparency and Accountability: Government agencies, elected officials, developers, utilities, and advocacy organizations alike should be held to clear standards of transparency, factual integrity, and public accountability. Decisions that affect communities should be made openly, with meaningful opportunities for residents to participate in the democratic process. An informed and engaged public is essential to democracy.

- Sustain SJ exists to strengthen civic engagement and mobilize residents to engage in local and state government.

Situational Assessment (SWOT)

Strengths

Public energy and engagement: Sustain SJ has tapped into widespread concerns regarding AI data centers, environmental resources, local government opacity and overdevelopment

True grassroots identity: Sustain SJ is currently viewed as a true resident-driven organization, non-partisan and unaffiliated

Authentic Authority: Sustain SJ has quickly nurtured and sustained relationships with established and experienced organizations

Weaknesses

Reactive Organizing and Overcommitment: Actions currently emerge issue-by-issue, rather than as a result of long-term planning and Sustain SJ collaborates, to some degree, with all issues brought forward

Opportunities

Regional organization desert: South Jersey remains politically underorganized compared to other areas' advocacy networks, creating a major opening for leadership

Unusually broad base: Presence of a hyperscale data center project acts as a rare nonpartisan issue that brings together residents of all ages, backgrounds and political perspectives

Potential for broader political realignment: Concerns surrounding responsible development and transparency have recently increased resident participation in local and regional politics, including key high-profile races, across South Jersey

Threats/Organizational Risks

Funding Vulnerability: Sustaining Sustain SJ's initiatives requires recurring operational funding, which is complicated by the status of 501(c)4.

Limited Institutional Structure and Policy/Legal Infrastructure: Sustain SJ is volunteer dependent with a number of followers but smaller number of engagers. Long-term influence requires targeted and organized committees as well as political and legal expertise.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 - Advance responsible development and environmental stewardship

Promote sustainable, responsible growth and development that prioritizes the protection of the natural environment, resources and community benefit.

Current Infrastructure: Sustain SJ maintains strong, collaborative relationships with Food and Water Watch, New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance, Pinelands Alliance, Kairos and Sierra Club NJ, among others.

Action Plan and Measurements

- Continue to strengthen partnerships with environmental organizations, community groups and government resources
 - ◆ Sustain SJ Members attend events hosted by partner organizations
 - ◆ Sustain SJ Reposts, shares and promotes events hosted by partner organizations
 - ◆ Sustain SJ collaborates on campaigns, public education efforts and advocacy initiatives
 - Measure(s): Number of environmental partnerships, length of relationship and frequency of collaboration
- Increase public awareness through workshops, webinars, volunteer opportunities, community events, social media and press releases
 - ◆ Speak at or co-lead webinar and educational events hosted by partner organizations
 - ◆ Expand educational outreach through social media, fliers, yard signs and press releases
 - Measure: Attendance records, repeat vs new attendee participation rates, volunteerism at events and initiatives, social media reach and engagement metrics, number of yard signs sold
- Successfully advocate for sustainable, responsible development policies and environmentally sound planning procedures
 - ◆ Lead the establishment of ordinances that promote responsible development
 - ◆ Organize rallies, awareness campaigns and public comment opportunities promoting ordinances in development
 - ◆ Partner with organizations backing a state-wide data center moratorium
 - Measure(s): Adoption or support of sustainable development policies within target communities and governments

Goal 2 - Strengthen Civic Engagement and Democratic Participation

Educate private citizens on the daily processes of local and regional government and promote the importance of staying informed, especially for the purpose of voting and shared accountability.

Current Infrastructure: Sustain SJ currently maintains a social media following of over 6,000 on Facebook and nearly 5,000 on Instagram

Action Plan and Measurements

- Increase public understanding of local and regional government processes
 - ◆ Hold “How to...” Seminars
 - Locate and read agendas
 - Speak before council, planning boards
 - How ordinances and resolutions are passed
 - How to submit and review OPRA requests
 - How county and municipal governments function
 - ◆ Develop and distribute cheat sheets, tip sheets and educational documents
 - Measure(s): Attendance records, agendas, repeat vs. first time participants, number of materials distributed at events and/or via social media, participant feedback and surveys
- Encourage consistent resident attendance and engagement at local meetings and civic processes
 - ◆ Share calendars, reminders, agendas, summaries with an emphasis on engaging in respectful discourse and/or FAQs leading up to meetings or civic processes
 - ◆ Offer, coordinate carpooling as needed
 - Measure(s): Attendance records, frequency of resident participation, number of materials distributed, social media engagement metrics

Goal 3 - Promote Transparency, Accountability and Informed Engagement

Empower residents with accurate information to strengthen the public’s oversight of governance and ability to advocate for accountability among public officials, government agencies, developers, utilities and institutions.

Current Infrastructure: Sustain SJ has developed a growing regional reputation for public education, issue awareness and grassroots civic engagement amongst our significant social media following

Action Plan and Measurements

- Increase public access to and understanding of local and regional processes through Goal #2
 - Measurement(s): Of success in Goal #2
- Strengthen public capacity for oversight and accountability
 - ◆ Host Community Speak Outs focused on providing a neutral, collaborative space to workshop the presentation of public concerns

- ◆ Foster respectful and constructive engagement
- ◆ Share calendars, reminders, agendas, summaries
 - Measure(s): Attendance records, frequency of resident participation, number of materials distributed, social media engagement metrics

Goal 4 - Build Organizational Capacity

Strengthen the operational sustainability, structure, resources and leadership of Sustain SJ so as to establish the infrastructure to maintain long-term community impact

Current Infrastructure: Sustain SJ benefits from a passionate and active core group of members with diverse backgrounds and strengths who are local to the target communities in South Jersey

Action Plan and Measurements

- Strengthen organizational infrastructure
 - ◆ Establish specific-focus committees (fundraising, social media and communications, events, etc)
 - ◆ Improve internal coordination, communication and operational procedures
 - ◆ Hold regular Board meetings
 - Measurement(s): Committee rosters, communication and internal process flow charts and records, By Laws, meeting records
- Expand fundraising initiatives and funding streams
 - ◆ Plan and host fundraising events
 - ◆ Pursue grants and connections with funders
 - ◆ Establish and collect membership dues
 - Measurement(s): Bookkeeping records, funding connections, events hosted, attendance records

By the end of the term year of this strategic plan, Sustain SJ will have positioned itself as a leading regional force for environmental stewardship, responsible civic engagement and transparent local governance. Sustain SJ will strengthen the capacity of residents to meaningfully participate in local government, advocate for responsible, community-focused development and hold local institutions accountable to the communities they serve.