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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sustainable Jersey City Receives \$10,000 Grant from Unilever

Grant to fund Urban Heat Island Effect studies across three Environmental Justice communities



SJC's Reema Patel (L) and Debra Italiano (R) announcing the grant win and project details.

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JERSEY CITY, N.J. (March, 29, 2021) — Sustainable Jersey City (SJC) announced it is the recipient of Unilever's 2021 Change Makers & Do-Gooders Community Grant. The \$10,000 grant was awarded for their project submission focusing on the Urban Heat Island (UHI) Effect. In partnership with [CAPA Strategies](#),

[Groundwork Elizabeth](#), and [South Ward Environmental Alliance \(SWEA\)](#), community members and Unilever volunteers will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the UHI Effect across three Environmental Justice Communities — Jersey City, Elizabeth, and Newark, New Jersey. Concurrently, SJC and [Rutgers Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute \(EOHSI\)](#) will also spearhead Air Quality Studies in all three municipalities.

The UHI Effect is an increase in ambient temperature due to dark, heat-absorbing urban surfaces such as asphalt roofs, roads, and parking lots — and is worsened due to a lack of tree cover. The temperature increase in affected neighborhoods worsens air quality, exacerbating respiratory ailments such as asthma, and causes heat-related health issues. The UHI Effect tends to disproportionately impact low income neighborhoods. These communities are often deprived of trees and green spaces, which naturally cool street level conditions. “The Urban Heat Island Effect and air pollution are a scourge that affects everyone, and is especially harmful to our city’s most vulnerable. Thank you to Sustainable JC, CAPA Strategies and Rutgers EOHSI for taking on this challenge. The award of a Unilever grant to study this challenge is good news for Jersey City” says Councilman James Solomon.

Extreme heat has, on average over the past 30 years, been shown to be the number one weather-related cause of mortality in the United States.

SJC’s UHI analysis activities stemmed from their [Tree Canopy restoration efforts](#) for Jersey City. SJC Founder and Chair Debra Italiano says, “The UHI Effect has serious health impacts, especially across Environmental Justice Communities. The data coming out of these studies will form the basis for municipal decision making and our own equity-focused climate action planning. We’re incredibly grateful for Unilever’s support, and for the support of our partners, including Rutgers EOHSI, whose pro-bono air quality studies will provide valuable insights into the correlation between the UHI Effect and Air Quality in impacted areas.”

Temperature data will be collected in three one-hour blocks over the course of a day; the optimal temperature threshold for collecting data is ~90 degrees Fahrenheit or above. Using specially designed thermal sensors mounted

on their cars, Citizen Scientists will drive along prescribed routes to record ambient temperatures and humidity across a number of sub-areas spanning the three Environmental Justice Communities. The data will be used to develop actionable reports for municipal decision makers and the general public. Councilman At Large, Rolando Lavarro says, “Jersey City is very fortunate to have SJC, CAPA Strategies, Rutgers EOHSI and their partners conducting this Heat Mapping Project. This important study will help us better understand the impacts of the Urban Heat Island Effect, particularly on Jersey City’s more vulnerable and low-income residents. More importantly, this campaign will ultimately help in the development of an equity policy agenda to improve the quality of life of our residents.”

The studies will be conducted through the Summer of 2021 and results are expected to be released in the Fall of 2021.

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About Sustainable Jersey City

Sustainable Jersey City (SJC), a 501(c)(3) organization is a collaborative network of green community groups, individuals, government and private organizations leading Jersey City towards a more sustainable and resilient future. With projects ranging from rain gardens to community composting, SJC has been developing and executing projects all over Jersey City since 2011. For more information, please visit <http://sustainablejc.org/>

About Groundwork Elizabeth

Groundwork Elizabeth is a 501c3 non-profit, founded in Elizabeth, N.J. in 2003 with the goal of building healthy, sustainable and equitable communities. For the past decade we have worked daily to develop programs and projects that educate, improve and enhance our local urban challenged environment and address quality of life issues of environmental and food injustice. Groundwork Elizabeth provides resources, education, and training to the environmentally underserved, and works cooperatively on a number of community based and public sector committees that incorporate our mission. For more information, please visit <http://www.groundworkelizabeth.com/>.

About South Ward Environmental Alliance

The South Ward Environmental Alliance (SWEA), is an alliance of residents and community based organizations with a focus on environmental justice issues in the South Ward of Newark, New Jersey. SWEA's mission is to cultivate healthy and vibrant neighborhoods by ensuring residents' voices are heard and they are active participants in decision making policies that impact their neighborhood. South Ward Environmental Alliance will cultivate residents to be: Informed, Empowered and Engaged on key environmental issues that impact their health and quality of life, to speak for themselves as Environmental Justice advocates and community partners in a community based participatory research decision making process. To learn more, please visit <https://www.southwardea.com/>.

About CAPA Strategies

CAPA (Climate Adaptation Planning and Analytics) Strategies, LLC is a global consulting firm based out of Portland, Oregon (US) working with municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and private businesses to address climate change and create more sustainable, equitable, and resilient places for humans to live. CAPA's flagship program is called 'Heat Watch' and consists of a step-by-step process for conducting urban heat field campaigns. Find out more at www.capastrategies.com

About Rutgers EOHSI

Rutgers Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute (EOHSI) Center for Environmental Exposures and Disease (CEED) was established in 1987 with a goal of understanding, detecting, preventing and solving environmental health problems through collaborative research. CEED has approximately 86 researchers from 23 Rutgers departments. CEED members serve as advisors to state, local, and national officials, professional associations, and citizens groups on issues of pollution and consequent disease, environmental health education and disease prevention. Current research projects include the effects of diesel air pollution on asthma and cardiac disease, the effects of nanoparticles used in manufacturing and consumer products, the interaction of genetic and environmental factors on disease, and the effects of diet on immune system functioning. To learn more, please visit <https://ceed.rutgers.edu/>