

## SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOP FUELS WIDESPREAD INTEREST

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, MLUC and partners NJ DEP's Bureau of Sustainable Communities and Innovative Technologies (NJDEP-BSCIT), New Jersey League of Municipalities and the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC), hosted a standing-room only workshop. The workshop was designed to assist New Jersey municipalities interested in sustainable development to identify goals, objectives, strategies, policies and programs to balance local economies with natural resource protection and social well-being.

Among the workshop's featured speakers were three municipal representatives. Mayor Ken Pringle from Belmar and Mayor Meryl Frank from Highland Park each spoke about the unique approach his/her community took toward "sustainability." Mayor Pringle emphasized the way that the concept was applied to a coastal community. Mayor Frank stressed Highland Park's walkability. James Sherman, Environmental Commission Chairman from Montclair, talked about the ways that "sustainability" might lead municipalities to become more cost-effective in the ways that they do business. Other speakers included NJ DEP BSCIT director Martin Rosen, Michael Ambrosio, an energy consultant and former State official with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJ BPU) and Anthony Sblendorio, a landscape architect who designed the Willow School in Somerset County. That school has received national recognition for its employment of green building materials and techniques.

At the conclusion of the speakers' remarks, participants were asked to recommend next steps. Meeting evaluation forms revealed that participants found the "Communities of Practice" sessions particularly inspiring. One respondent noted, "They breathed life into why sustainable communities are important and how to go about implementing them." Another wondered, "If they can do it, why can't my community?"

When asked to identify the top 3 programs of interest for future programs, participants chose *Community Sustainability Plans and Planning; Green Building and Site Design Principles, and Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy Programs*. Follow-up meetings and events include a Green Building Tour Series tentatively slated for May (BASF House); June (Willow School) and July (Neptune Summerfield Elementary School). MLUC is also planning to host "Sustainable Partners Networking Meetings" in April and May to identify tools, resources and programs which can aid municipal governments and their communities to approach sustainability. A list of resources for sustainability is posted on the MLUC website. If you would like to be added to our new Sustainable Communities email list, please contact Winnie Fatton at 609-771-2832 or fatton@tcnj.edu.