

## SJC CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN URBAN SUSTAINABILITY 2024

### INSTRUCTOR PROFILES

#### 5 Modules - 2 Sessions Each Module

- Sustainability and Resiliency / Systems Thinking
- Environmental Justice / Eco Justice
- Emissions & Emissions Reduction / Transition to Renewables
- Urban Ecology & Green Infrastructure Perspectives
- Waste Streams

#### Welcome & Introduction - Tues March 12th

#### Course Facilitator – Debra Italiano / Founder & Chair, Sustainable JC



[Debra Italiano](#)  
[Sustainable Jersey City](#)  
[917-447-9839](#)

**Deb Italiano**, Founder & Chair of Sustainable Jersey City (SJC), is also the President and a member of the Board of Directors for Sustainable Jersey City (SJC), an education non-profit established in 2011 focused on sustainable community, resiliency and climate action planning. She is passionate about urban sustainability and the power of community networks. She has spearheaded SJC's non-profit mission since 2011, which is committed to developing a broad platform for community engagement, bringing resources to stakeholder groups for green neighborhood initiatives and structuring a framework for ongoing civic leadership and sustainability focused educational opportunities.

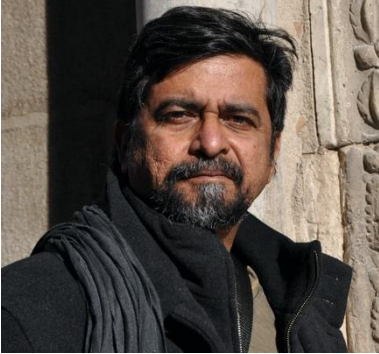
Deb is a LEED AP, and Managing Principal of Merintra Co., LLC, a strategic business and market development consulting firm based in Jersey City that she founded in 2003. Prior to founding Merintra she spent 15 years on Wall Street leading large scale change initiatives related to governance and strategy alignment for both Morgan Stanley and JP Morgan Chase. She received her BS from Pace University in New York City.

## **Module 1 – Sustainability / Resiliency / Systems Thinking - 2 Sessions (6 hours)**

**Instructor - Ashwani Vasishth**

**Session Dates: March 12th & March 19th**

### **Sessions 1 & 2 - Taking a Systems Approach to Urban Sustainability & Resiliency Planning**



**Ashwani Vasishth, SJC Board Member  
Sustainability Professor  
Ramapo College  
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**Ashwani Vasishth** is Professor in Sustainability, Convener of the undergraduate Sustainability Program (BA) as well as the Environmental Studies Program (BA). He is Director of the Center for Sustainability at Ramapo College of New Jersey. He is past-President of the New Jersey Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability (NJHEPS). He has also part of the South India Study Abroad as well as the Peru Study Abroad Convening Groups. His pedagogy is focused on Education for Sustainability (EfS) from within a transdisciplinary framework, and from within the context of a globalizing Sustainable Development paradigm.

He has research interests in an evolutionary ecosystem approach, urban ecology, systems thinking and mental models.

He received his PhD from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, in Ecological Planning, and his Masters Degree from MIT, Cambridge, in International Development. He has an undergraduate degree in Architecture from India, with a focus on vernacular shelter systems and disaster resilience.

## **MODULE 2 – ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE / ECO JUSTICE**

**Instructors – David Larrabee & Ashwani Vasishth**

**Session Dates: March 26<sup>th</sup> & April 2nd**

### **Session 3 – Understanding Environmental and Eco Justice Concepts and Frameworks**

### **Session 4 – Local Perspectives on Environmental Justice**



**David Larrabee, SJC Board Member**

SJC Eco Ambassador Team Lead

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**David Larrabee's** work attempts to bring theology, science, and economics into dialog around the social justice implications of our unhealthy relationship to the planet. This includes the implications of both individual and collective lifestyles on both the planet and those most at risk from environmental harm. His passion started at Cornell as a member of the Eco-Justice task force, where he earned a PhD in applied physics. While working in industry David obtained his Master of Business Administration. Returning to academia David obtained the rank of professor of physics. He retired from East Stroudsburg University after earning a MA in systematic theology to work on environmental justice issues full time. David lives in NJ with his wife Carolyn Carney.

**MODULE 3 - EMISSIONS & EMISSIONS REDUCTION / TRANSITION TO RENEWABLES**

**Instructors: David Larrabee**

**Session Dates – April 9<sup>th</sup> & April 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Session 5 – Emissions Introduction and Overview + Emissions Redux Opportunities**

**Session 6 – Introduction to the NJ Energy Industry + Transition to Renewables**

**MODULE 4 – URBAN ECOLOGY & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PERSPECTIVES**

**Instructors: Susan Kaplan & Heather Sporn**

**Session Dates – April 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**Session 7 – Best Practices In Urban Sustainability**



Susan D. Kaplan

USGBC Senior Fellow

BuildingWrX

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Susan Kaplan is a LEED Fellow with over 30 years of experience in sustainability. She came to sustainability from a background in landscape architecture and environmental science, which has led Ms. Kaplan to work on developing collaborative, integrated solutions for moving buildings, sites, neighborhoods and cities towards true sustainability and equity.

Through Ms. Kaplan's consulting firm, BuildingWrx, she has recently addressed the question of how to create a broader sustainability platform for projects, one that is not limited to one rating system or one approach, and one that addresses issues of resiliency, equity and health and well-being

Susan Kaplan was recently honored to be designated a USGBC Sr. Fellow to help drive a social equity framework for USGBC/GBCI. Ms. Kaplan currently serves as a member of USGBC's LEED for Cities and Communities Working Group and has recently served on the NAACP's initiative – Centering Equity in the Sustainable Building Sector and as a member of the International WELL Building Institute's WELL Community Advisory.

Ms. Kaplan has a long history of sustainability, beginning with work at the Battery Park City Authority, where she was the founding Director of Sustainable Development. In that position, she oversaw the development of the green guidelines for the Authority for both new and existing residential and commercial buildings in lower Manhattan. As a result of the Authority's groundbreaking program, five million square feet of early sustainable buildings and open space were created.

Ms. Kaplan is a founding chair of the USGBC's Social Equity Working Group. As such, she has helped create LEED Pilot Credits that reward community involvement, reward selection of materials that have a more sustainable supply chain, and projects that pay living wages to construction and maintenance workers.



**Heather Sporn, RLA, ENV SP**

SJC Board Member

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Heather is a New York State Registered Landscape Architect (RLA) and Environmental Sustainability Professional (ENV SP) who spent for more than 30 years in New York State and City government in the areas of project management, urban design, transportation, park and open space design, pedestrian and multimodal accommodation, bikeway design, , environmental analysis, public outreach and consensus building. She has worked for the NYC Parks Department, the Bronx Zoo and New York State Department of Transportation. Her resume includes managing the urban design of the Route 9A/Westside Highway Project from Battery Place to 59<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, including the post-9/11

rebuilding of West Street, A Vision Plan for a Green Route 347 in Long Island, urban design component of the shared-use path on the Mario Cuomo/Tappan Zee Bridge, and the I- 81 Project in Syracuse New York. She has also worked in the private sector as a project manager for environmental studies for transportation projects.

Heather serves on the board of the Jersey City Reservoir Preservation Alliance, where she is chair of its Infrastructure Committee, and she also serves as Board Member and Advisor for Sustainable Jersey City (SJC).

Heather holds a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, a Master of Urban Planning from the City College of New York, and a Master of Fine Arts from the New York Academy of Art and has completed Rutgers Urban Forestry Core Training Program. She is a resident of the Heights neighborhood.

## **Session 8 –Best Practices In Community Engagement**

[Gensler Public Engagement Lab Team Bio](#)

**Session Date – April 30th**

## **Module 5 – WASTE STREAMS**

**Session 9 – Global Economic Perspectives**

**Session 10 – Local / Regional Perspectives**

**Instructor – David Larrabee**

**Session Dates – May 7th & May 14th**