



Melissa Targett, ENV SP, LEED AP BD+C, ND, CSBA, is the Sustainable Design Manager in the Engineering Department at The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ). As part of the Resilience and Sustainable Design Group, Melissa manages the development and implementation of the Agency's Sustainable Building Guidelines, Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines, and Climate Resilience Design

Guidelines. With over 18 years of experience, Melissa serves as the department's technical resource for Sustainable Design across Agency projects and programs, including the Envision Silver application for the Bayonne Bridge Project. Current projects include major redevelopments at three (3) of the Agency's Airports – LaGuardia, Newark, and JFK, including replacement of the AirTrain systems at Newark and JFK, replacement of the Lincoln Tunnel Helix, numerous State of Good Repair projects, and oversight of Tenant projects located throughout Agency assets.

Prior to joining the PANYNJ in March 2014, Melissa performed project management and sustainable design consulting on numerous transportation infrastructure projects. Major projects included Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) / New York City Transit's first LEED building at the Corona Yard in Queens, second LEED building at the Mother Clara Hale Bus Depot in Harlem, and the Rehabilitation and Resilient Design for the South Ferry Station following Super Storm Sandy.

Professional Experience

What drew you to your field of work?

I knew from an early age that I wanted to work in the Environmental Science/Sustainability field. This desire was driven by two early experiences - growing up near one of the most polluted waterways in the United States and working on a detailed wetland project while in high school. While doing research for the project, I discovered how valuable and important wetlands are and began thinking in terms of ecosystems and how they interconnect with the built environment. After graduating in 2001 with a BA in Environmental Studies and a concentration in Policy, I searched for ways to make the most impact on the conservation of natural systems and resources. I became focused on implementation and searched for ways to work on execution of policy. I started working for a full-service Architecture, Engineering, and Construction Management firm assisting on proposals, specifications, and eventually on design and construction management. This was a great introduction to the

design and construction industry and exposed me to the LEED Rating System. I became a LEED AP in 2004 and in 2009/2010, I enrolled in the Sustainable Building Advisor Program offered at New York Institute of Technology and became a Certified Sustainable Building Advisor (CSBA). From there I have continued to pursue implementation of sustainable design on larger and more complex projects, including large infrastructure projects which introduced me to ISI and Envision.

What has been your biggest career challenge?

The biggest challenge of my career has been developing the experience and skills needed to help drive design decisions. Early in my career I would frequently sit with architects and engineers, asking a million questions to try and understand their approach and to identify opportunities for sustainability. At one point, I considered going back to school for a Master of Architecture degree. I strongly believe that the most advantageous opportunities for Sustainable Design exist in the overlap between disciplines; picking one area to focus on seemed counterintuitive. I often joke that I am good at the work that I do because I am “without discipline” – meaning I am not biased toward any component of the design work and this affords me the ability to look at a project holistically – I don’t miss the forest for the trees.

What has been your proudest career moment?

The proudest moment of my career to-date was the first project that I completed a third-party certification on. The project was under construction for over ten years and spanned my work at two different firms.

Envision Experience

How did you learn about Envision?

I first heard about Envision at an ACEC/ASCE event in Brooklyn in late 2010/early 2011 where the draft Rating System was being presented.

Why did you decide to pursue an Envision credential?

I decided to become an ENV SP after starting my current position at the PANYNJ. The Agency owns and operates a diverse portfolio of transportation infrastructure and has their own Sustainable Design Guidelines. Knowing that the majority of my work would be shifting from vertical infrastructure to a horizontal infrastructure focus, I sought to better understand how Sustainable Design could be applied in this context. The Envision Credential provided a vehicle for me to acquire and demonstrate this knowledge.

How are you using Envision? / How is your organization using Envision?

Last year, the PANYNJ successfully completed the Envision verification of the Bayonne Bridge Project. The project's development predated the issuance of the Envision Rating System and was instead designed in accordance with the PANYNJ's Sustainable Design Guidelines. In 2014, the Agency sought to benchmark its Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines against industry best practices and began working on a comparison to Envision using the Bayonne Bridge Project as the test case. We determined that with a few tweaks to our documentation and by collecting additional information from other parts of the Agency, the project should meet the Silver level.

Currently, the Agency is in the process of updating our Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines to align with Envision. Additionally, we are progressively requiring Envision on our larger procurement efforts.

Can you share some highlights from an Envision project? / How are you putting your ENV SP credential to use?

I had the opportunity to work on the committee to assist in the development of the construction credits for Envision v3 and am currently using my ENV SP to support the update to our Sustainable Infrastructure Guidelines and provide oversight on major capital projects.

What does sustainable infrastructure mean to you?

To me, sustainable infrastructure means a project that not only does less harm but contributes to the regeneration of communities, protection of natural ecosystems, and conservation of resources.

Fun Facts

What are some of your favorite hobbies and interests?

I love being outdoors hiking or backpacking and enjoy creating pottery.