

Erie County Hospitality Industry Seeing Green Results

The Hyatt's rooftop herb garden shows signs of significant progress

A new rooftop herb garden residing on top of the Hyatt Regency hotel in downtown Buffalo is a milestone that the two-year old Buffalo Green Hospitality Initiative is producing economic dividends for the region.

The Buffalo Green Hospitality Initiative was formed in August 2007. The goal of the Initiative is to develop and maintain environmentally responsible practices and promote a green experience for travelers and conventioners visiting our region. Through embracing these practices, it will create economic development opportunities for the region by reducing business operating costs while attracting eco-conscious conferences, meetings, and visitors.

A rapidly increasing number of conventions are requiring sustainable practices by the cities they select to host their events. "Being Green" is no longer a novelty, is it a requirement. As a result of Buffalo having a sustainable hospitality program, the following conferences have scheduled or held meetings in Buffalo: **American Solar Energy Conference 2009 (4,000 attendees), North American Association of Environmental Educators 2009 (1,200 attendees), US Environmental Protection Agency (500 attendees), National Brownfield Association 2008 (200 attendees) and Building Materials Reuse Association (170 attendees)**. Due to the maturation of Buffalo's program and the lengthy meeting planning schedule, the number of conventions coming to Buffalo that require green initiatives will increase significantly moving forward.

Led by the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau and a consortium of over 20 local partners, the industry examined numerous ways to improve performance in the areas of waste management, energy savings, food production and disposal, water savings, environmentally safe cleaning products, paints, and office practices.

A prime example of the Buffalo Green Hospitality Initiative in action is the herb garden on the rooftop of the Hyatt Regency in downtown Buffalo. There, over 13 tons of food scraps were taken to Good Earth, who then donated the compost soil back to the Hyatt who in turn used it for soil in their rooftop herb garden. The garden is then watered by rain barrels provided by Buffalo Niagara Riverkeepers. The herbs are then harvested and return to the end user through the Hyatt Regency's culinary services.

A sampling of activities that are now taking place within the Buffalo hospitality industry, include:

- Bike racks installed to encourage pedal power
- Trees are being planted to offset electric use
- No Styrofoam is being used and recycled products are utilized
- If possible, food and beverage is purchased from locally produced sources
- Encouraging the use of reusable serving utensils instead of disposables

- Promote the use of bulk food and beverage products
- Plastic, cans, cardboard, paper and kitchen oil are recycled
- 5% of the energy is US EPA Certified Green Power
- Paper contains 30% post consumer waste
- Light bulbs are energy savings products
- Recycles printer cartridges
- E-mails preferred to paper correspondence
- Customers are encouraged to recycle convention supplies
- Use environmentally friendly cleaning supplies
- Operates on state-of-the-art energy efficient HVAC system
- Restrooms are equipped with electronic flush and faucet systems and include automated soap and paper dispensers
- Unused foods are donated to food banks and shuttles
- New dish machine uses 30% less water and cleaning products than standard
- Internal correspondence is printed double-sided.

Another significant result of the green hospitality initiative is a self-certification program that properties can use as guidelines for implementing green practices that will be available from the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning and the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau. After completing the workbook and a certain level of self-certification, the facility will earn the right to be a green service provider and the CVB will assist the certification partner in marketing efforts.

Participating partners are: Adam's Mark Buffalo, Buffalo Bisons, Buffalo Blue Bikes, Buffalo Lodging, Buffalo Museum of Science, Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau, Buffalo State College, City of Buffalo, County of Erie, Delaware North Companies, Ecology and Environment, Inc., Edible Buffalo, Hyatt Regency, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, Niagara University, NYSERDA, Re-Tree WNY, Rich Products, Tiff Nature Preserve, Uniland Development, and University at Buffalo.

#