

Corey Kapschke





By Jennie Lay

Sustainable Steamboat

leg to stand on, and a sustainability bar to see how they measure up. The Sustainable Steamboat certification program helps business owners figure out how they can best do business with not only the bottom line, but Mother Earth, in mind.

“Every little bit helps,” says Lyn Halliday, the sustainability certification program’s instigator. Lyn spent the first third of her career in a New Jersey planning department, as that state’s first environmental planner. In the early 1990s, she moved to Steamboat to be a wrangler for the ski area’s summer horseback riding program. Instead, she landed at Ski Corp. as its longtime environmental affairs director. Last year, Lyn took her dream of spreading sustainability to the Chamber, and her certification plan took off.

The Sustainable Steamboat program is about applying sustainable business practices on a local, grassroots level, Lyn says. It’s about affecting consumer preferences, and ultimately changing how public policy is made. It’s also about altering how businesses define prosperity.

Sage advice at the Summit

“Sustainability is more than just recycling. It’s more than highway cleanups. Climate change is a new playing field entirely,” said Auden Schendler, Aspen Skiing Company’s director of environmental affairs. The renowned eco-warrior (who found his first Rocky Mountain stint in Steamboat years ago) was sharing his sustainability battle stories and strategies with attendees at Steamboat’s Economic Summit in May. “If you want to stay in business forever, you need to deal with climate.”

Auden points out that financial success, social responsibility and proactive environmental management are interrelated. That’s part of the redefinition of prosperity, and a shift in purchasing preferences, that is going on globally. There’s so much activity here that since 1999, the Dow Jones Sustainability Index has been tracking financial performance of the world’s leading sustainability-driven companies – with exceptional results. But that doesn’t mean it’s easy.

“If it were as easy as the consultants told you, we would have done it already,” Auden said. “It’s more like trench warfare than

surgery. Pursuing sustainability makes people think differently. It makes them get creative.”

At the heart of sustainable business is adopting a triple bottom line paradigm that mutually considers environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts. This has a ripple effect.

“A good resort is first a good community,” advised Terry Minger, CEO of the Center for Resource Management. “It’s (Steamboat’s) moment in the sun, no doubt. But you’ve got to be careful not to get sunburned.”

For instance, investing in green construction is more valuable than just efficiency. It’s about long-term productivity and accountability. “Fundamentally, green building is not about the buildings. The buildings are the artifacts. It’s about a shift in mindset,” Sandy Wiggins, LEED chair of the U.S. Green Building Council, told the summit crowd. He calls sustainability “growth at the point of impact,” reconciling humanity with nature. “You don’t change the world from Washington, D.C., you do it from Steamboat Springs,” Sandy said.

Environmental consultant Lyn Halliday is the instigator behind the Steamboat Chamber’s green revolution.

Whether it’s in the realm of tourism, construction, real estate, retail or a small entrepreneur, the notion of “going green” is growing into an enticing option for more and more Steamboat Springs business owners.

While many businesses have been recycling, swapping out light bulbs and promoting public transportation for years, others are just beginning to reevaluate their best business practices in the context of what’s best for the environment – both inside the office and internationally. What is becoming readily apparent is that everyone can do more.

The Steamboat Springs Chamber Resort Association is offering local businesses a green

Lyn’s “no-brainers” to help make your business more sustainable:

- 1. Energy:** Change lightbulbs to compact fluorescents, and put a long-term plan in place to switch over to Energy Star appliances over time.
- 2. Water:** Use xeriscape in your landscaping and smarter irrigation times.
- 3. Waste:** Reduce the amount you send to the landfill. If there’s a major process change, like paperless billing, start now to work your staff and your customers in slowly.

Bringing it to the office

For businesses that opt to go for the Chamber’s sustainable certification, Lyn offers hands-on assistance. She’s their personal coach, helping to identify new practices and goals and achieve their desired green, bronze, silver or gold certification status. The sustainability auditing process is about helping businesses along, and offering ideas that not only make

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them greener, but more efficient.

"We talk about some really honest stuff," Lyn says. The process is confidential, but as a Chamber program, this is also an opportunity to share ideas and solutions with other local businesses.

For starters, all participating businesses must designate a sustainability coordinator, incorporate sustainability into their mission statement and plan to reduce annual use of energy, water and waste. Beyond that, there's a long list of electives that allows businesses to customize a sustainability program that works best for them. And businesses get credit where credit is due – existing green practices are recognized.

The time it takes to earn sustainability certification varies dramatically. Marabou, Moots, BAP! and Images of Nature were Steamboat's first four businesses to jump on board, and their certifications were complete within the first three months of launching the program. Also in the lineup is the city of Steamboat, a much bigger and more complex process, Lyn says. "They're trying to walk the talk," she says. "But the bigger it is, the longer it takes to retrofit."

Sustainable business benefits are multifold. Studies repeatedly show that a healthier school or work place yields better productivity. Saving resources improves the bottom line. And helping save the planet

garners employee pride. "The power of the employee is an unbelievable thing. Great ideas come from them," Lyn says.

The Chamber program aims to be educational and achieve measurable results. It's simple enough to apply quantifiable goals to more than 900 varied local businesses – in a way that can be meaningful to customers. The performance-based program involves setting goals and tracking accomplishments. It's a chance for greater transparency, increased employee loyalty, claiming industry leadership and enhancing your business' reputation. Going green is good, credible PR.

"We know a lot of businesses do a lot, but don't always have time to do more," Lyn says. She says that part of the process is getting people to learn, and start doing more, between their annual assessments. "Things change. They will evolve. It boils down to your goals and expectations over time."

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Incentivizing a sustainable commute: Employees at Moots Cycles earn #1 a day for riding their bikes to work. Each dollar can go toward purchasing new Moots equipment or boosting the fundraising efforts of a vital nonprofit organization in Steamboat. Moots was one of Steamboat's first businesses to sign up for the Chamber's sustainable business certification program.



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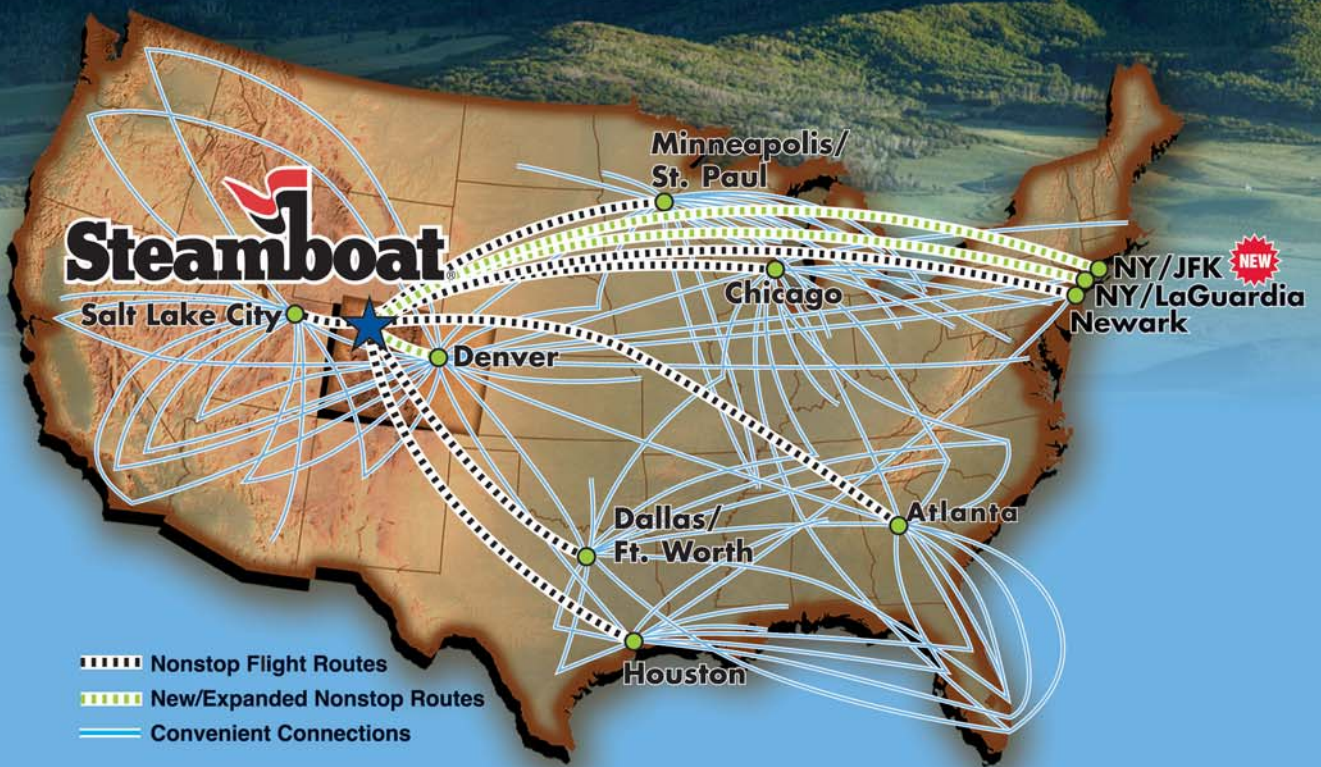
Want to make your business certifiably sustainable?

Visit the Chamber's Sustainable Steamboat Business Program Web site for program details and an enrollment form. They also have worksheets available for businesses that want to get a jump on the process and see where their green practices succeed, or need help.

www.steamboatchamber.com/info/sustainable_business_program.asp
Or contact Lyn Halliday at 970-879-6323, lhalliday@springsips.com

REPLACEMENT OF:

Sustainable business certification at "The Red House," home of BAP!, Big Agnes and Honey Stinger, started with a staff brainstorming session and continues the greening with monthly sustainability meetings. The results: These companies recycle nearly everything from both the manufacturing facilities and the office – and they purchase recycled fabrics and materials to put in their products. More than 50% of the business is wind powered. An incentive to commute by bus, bike or carpool earns each employee one day of paid vacation for every 30 days of sustainable commuting.



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Courtesy of Marabou Ranch Realty - Pierce photographer

Designed with wildlife habitat and agriculture in mind, approximately 1,325 acres of Marabou remain open space. Riparian improvements along more than two miles of the Elk River are estimated to cost more than \$1 million.

Mara' who?

The Marabou development along the Elk River, west of Steamboat, was the first business to qualify for gold level certification in the Chamber's sustainable business program. "We worked very hard to create a legacy of stewardship at Marabou and ensure that the land, water and wildlife habitats are maintained, protected and enhanced for future generations. We are actually increasing the wildlife carrying capacity and improving the agricultural production," says Judy Wagar of Due West Land, Marabou's developer. "Jeff Temple and his partners have made a meaningful commitment to create a new stewardship and sustainability model for others to consider."



Marabou used the Built Green point system to construct amenities around the ranch, averaging more than double the required points for green certification of all buildings. Each Marabou owner who incorporates Built Green principles into their individual home construction gets a \$10,000 bonus.

"When you're doing green construction, you need someone who is the champion of it to lead the way. It's evolution. It takes a lot to make a big change, even a small change."

-Lyn Halliday

