



Troy Chamber's New "Green Business Initiative" Program Helps Member Companies Embrace Sustainable Practices to Save Money, Conserve Resources and Provide Healthier Workplaces

By Angela Jeruzal, Rossetti Architects & Troy Chamber Sustainable Practices Committee

The Troy Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce the launch of its Green Business Initiative (GBI), a program that assists chamber member companies in implementing sustainable practices in their facilities and operations. By participating in the program, GBI-member businesses do their part for the planet and the well being of their employees by engaging in environmentally responsible yet practical 'green' business operations and practices.

Developed and launched by the Chamber's Sustainable Practices Committee, the GBI utilizes a standard check list to first easily identify everyday green practices which are already in place or that can easily be implemented, such as replacing standard light bulbs with incandescent bulbs; using programmable thermostats; recycling paper, boxes, and non-returnable beverage containers; and installing low-flow plumbing fixtures. The checklist also covers items which may require more thought, effort, or expense, such as purchasing renewable power; purchasing from green vendors or service providers; utilizing green cleaning and pest control materials; using captured wastewater for irrigation; and the use of remote conferencing and Web Ex capabilities, and the potential for remote work access options to cut down on excessive transportation and carbon emissions.

The GBI also provides opportunities for implementing and tracking green initiatives to ultimately reduce operating costs. "In addition to the obvious environmental benefits, the sustainable practices outlined as part of the Green Business Initiative can help lower business operating expenses through measurable energy and waste savings," said Rob Thomasian, Sales Manager, Michigan Green Energy, Inc. and Co-chair of the Troy Chamber's Sustainable Practices Committee. "The guidelines can help companies actually track cost savings and provide an incentive for engaging in additional sustainable activities."

Troy's GBI was modeled after a similar program implemented by the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, with the intent of demonstrating to local business how relatively easy it was to create a sustainable work environment with minimal or limited expense, leading to a provable return on investment.

"While many excellent greening programs already existed in the marketplace, the Troy GBI's straightforward and practical approach de-mystifies what it means to be green. The program easily identifies potential cost savings, particularly at a time when the region has been so economically

challenged and the pursuit of a sustainable workplace may not have been a top priority,” said Paulette Alioa, Managing Partner, Green Space Consultants. “It is an excellent opportunity for the area business community to engage in a user-friendly program that helps them track measurable financial benefits, while enhancing their business image as good stewards of the environment.”

Adds Alioa, “Green work environments also are strategic recruitment, public relations and marketing tools for attracting and retaining employees, and one of the factors that many people consider when relocating to a community.”

The GBI also increases employee awareness of the benefits of sustainable practices and energy conservation both in the office and at home, and promotes camaraderie in the workplace when employees participate in common goals such as recycling, reducing waste and keeping track of energy efficient practices.

“Make an environmental policy that each employee agrees to, and form a ‘green team’ committee to bring new ideas to the table and create ownership of the program,” says Alioa. “Engaged, enthusiastic participants ultimately make for successful programs.”

One of the first Chamber members to get involved with the GBI was the International Academy of Design & Technology, and Jordan Kotubey, IADT Director of Information Systems, Facilities and Campus Safety, says that the program highlighted many of the green practices the school was already engaging in and suggested other items, many of which have since been implemented. “The Academy was able to quickly work through the checklist to identify areas where we were already doing ‘green’ things and areas where we could improve our level of environmental responsibility. We also looked at ways to provide substantial reductions in operating costs by adding programmable thermostats, re-examining our building automation systems, and by utilizing other cost effective green practices.” Kotubey also is a Troy Chamber Sustainable Practices Committee member.

Application to enroll in the Green Business Initiative program is \$100, which includes a GBI window sticker for their business, and recognition on the Troy Chamber website and in press materials promoting the GBI for companies who complete a minimum number of green improvements. You must be a Troy Chamber member to participate. Sponsorship opportunities to help support the initiative are available as well. For more information on the Troy Chamber of Commerce Green Business Initiative, visit <http://www.troychamber.com/green/>.