

Environmental Case Study;
Submitted for TravelGreen.Org
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On behalf of:



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1. Overview (and Background)

The Green Spa NY is owned and operated by Sheila Brody, Maria Ingardia, and Maureen Brody. This submission was written by Sheila Brody.

We proudly present the first and only Full Service, Luxury Green Wellness Center (& building) in New York City; GREEN SPA NY! We are committed to bringing “Wellness” to you & your environment today, tomorrow and beyond. Since 1998, nestled in the heart of Brooklyn, our quaint environment continues to customize treatments for each individual or group. With a private Whisper Lounge, our very own Organic Tea & Wine Garden, secluded Movement Studio, and award winning services; our sanctuary is the perfect location for events, meetings, afternoon brunch or a special day! Located in the first and only Green Building in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, overall wellness of all guests is our number one priority. ***With recycled denim insulation in our walls, zero voc paint, a soy roof, an air purifying system in place,*** and much more, the Green Spa NY goes the extra mile to benefit our guests health and wellness needs. We have created a haven, offering treatments for Men & Women of all ages, teens and even some children’s services. ***All guests receive VIP Treatment utilizing all natural, vegan and organic ingredients.*** We are ever-expanding by creating “packages” combining local activities, attractions, and community based organizations to encourage visitation to Green Spa NY and Brooklyn in general.

In 2006, the then existing Spa and Wellness Center underwent a major renovation in which the entire brownstone was transformed into an eco-friendly building with complete eco-friendly services. Some may ask; “***What was your motivation for this project?***” You may assume that consumer demand, government regulations or competitive pressure would be our incentive. But as pioneers in the Green Movement, our primary motivation was our good conscience and the health of our guests, staff and ourselves. We knew that if we wanted our vision of an eco-friendly business to be truly green, we would have to completely renovate the space to convert our existing business and start a new Wellness Center which meant all new construction.

When you look up the word “Wellness”, or “Google” it, you may find several definitions such as; *“Wellness is the physical state of good health, as well as, the mental ability to enjoy and appreciate being healthy and fit. Wellness is a state of balance between health and fitness physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.”* Whatever the word means to others, I am pretty sure it does not include the word “toxins”! Along with the help of some friends, we found that there were many more things to do to “GO GREEN” than just using a recycling bin. We actually became addicted to finding out how Green we can be, hence the idea of establishing an environmental program originated & our motivation grew.

Planning and Origination: The planning for our project took a little over 1 year and the building itself; another year. When the project was in its seed stages, in Brooklyn NY, the Green movement was on its forefront & mostly an upcoming idea reserved for those who had the “Green” to hire specialists such as Green Architects, Green Builders & Designers. Since we had very little “Green” for our project, these specialists were out of our reach. Consequently, we had some decisions to make! With my partners, Maureen & Maria, we worked diligently to get the entire project on its way. **Maureen** (*who became our “Marketing & Advertising Specialist”*), **Maria** (*rising to the “Finance Guru” role*) & myself (**Shelia**) as our “Designer” started on our journey. We investigated for about one year to research, educate ourselves & put together our plan for what would be Green Spa NY. Then we had to educate our Architect, Builders, Carpenters, Plumbers, Painters, and the list goes on.

We changed many lives during this education process. Some people asked us “Why Green & why now?” We were completely gutting out our almost condemned building that had not been touched since 1970. We did salvage any materials that we could; one being our cast iron tubs. (*Originally, we were told that these tubs were not salvageable, but our guests today will tell you differently!*)

We always emphasize if you can do better for the environment and the overall benefit of the planet, “How can you not do the right thing?” It is difficult to hear people say ‘It just cannot happen.’ So, we did the research and found out there were alternatives for our project and we could not just go with the easier toxic way! We sought out the facts & we did not listen to any naysayers. The process is a long one as we are still learning each and every day.

2. Program Establishment

There were many steps we took to establish this program. The first was educating us by surrounding ourselves in “**GREEN**”. Our project team consisted of me, my partners Maureen & Maria, friends & family along with online and local environmental groups plus others like Josh Dorfman, who wrote “The Lazy Environmentalist”.

We designed our program within the parameters of whom we knew & who was willing to help us. I would love to say that we had an elaborate detailed plan made by my finance specialist, but that was not the case. We made the best plan we could with the tools we had & hoped for the best. (By the way, I do not recommend this method as it caused unnecessary stress on all of us!) The plan to Green the facilities worked toward shaping our mission “Creating Wellness for You & Your Environment.” One of our mottos that we stand by is “***We are Greener today than we were yesterday & we strive to be Greener tomorrow than we are today!***”

Executing this mission on a daily basis is sometimes taxing but totally worth it in the end. For instance, one story where the impact was felt was with the construction workers. As many know when you hire a contractor, the contractor has a large group of laborers who do the dirty work. Our builder never heard about **recycled denim insulation** and was not sure if they would know how to use it so he insisted we use the regular insulation. We had another idea. We sought out what was ALL OF THE RECYCLED DENIM on the east coast! We bought all of it in New York, Philadelphia & then had a truck come up from North Carolina and we covered it all. I think I ordered one extra roll; not too far off for my own measuring! Anyway, the blue denim insulation was delivered & no one had a choice but to learn how to put this “foreign stuff up on the walls”. Guess what? It was no different from the regular stuff; it was just better!

Same went for the **paint** that stuck on the wall like any toxic paint. The non-toxic grout actually held up for the tile specialist who would not guarantee his work because he stated “If there are no toxins, what would hold it together?” He also said, “If these tiles fall on your head, I am not responsible.” Our plumber actually stated that “I cannot use black pipe or copper pipe because PVC is better.” We insisted and were forced to watch each and every one of these “professionals” with a close eye. **The point is that with all these varied specialists, we showed them an alternative that they shared with their co-workers, and this list is endless!**

3. Goals and Benchmarking

Becoming or striving to become sustainable is a daily effort that we are continually developing & expanding upon. **The goals are to do the very best we can to protect the environment, the health of individuals visiting & working in our facility while keeping our business growing.**

Some of our sustainable practices include:

- Recycled denim insulation and recycled, energy efficient material used during our construction process in all walls
- Zero VOC Paint and clay on walls & stain on wood
- Zero VOC Japanese Stucco applied on the storefront
- Air purifying systems to constantly clean the air
- High efficiency washer & dryers in our laundry room
- No use of PVC plastic pipes for plumbing
- Dual flush toilets where you decide amount of water needed
- Non-toxic bathroom tile adhesives, grout, glues & caulking for all projects
- Energy efficient light bulbs installed in indoor & outdoor lighting (installed in June 2007 and so far no replacements needed!!)
- Bamboo flooring for our Movement & Exercise studios, since bamboo is a plant & grows rapidly and using it sustains our forests
- Non-toxic adhesives used for mosaic artwork
- Low VOC stains and sealant for woodwork
- Sustainable & fireproof tin ceiling tiles
- Salvaged antique furniture up cycled & refurbished to meet spa needs

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- Paperstone countertops installed in workstations
- Soy Roof which reduces temperature in the building up to 15 degrees
- Windmill powered energy used for electric in the building
- Recycled iron tub original to building upcycled & used during our treatments
- Recycled paper and soy ink used for the menu of services, business cards, promotional materials, shopping bags, etc. for all printing
- Corn plastic with soy ink used for all gift cards.
- Organic Cotton used during all facial & nail treatments
- Recycled toilet paper, paper towel, tissue, garbage bags, corn plastic & compostable cups & cutlery used for special events
- Non-toxic cleaning products used throughout the facilities
- Natural & chemical free & organic products used for treatments where possible
- Organic Massage Oils & creams used for massages boast an eco-twist
- Natural & organic ingredients used for body exfoliated treatments are freshly ground ourselves
- Vegan Spa Nail care products used exclusively in all spa manicure & pedicure treatments.

My partners & I have taken things a step further & created our own signature retail product lines. We created organic vegetable & soy wax candles, an all natural skin care line, and an all natural tea line that we cannot keep on our shelves.

Our success is proven in our ability to constantly improve our mission and find new ways to “Go and be Green.” We embark upon many community related programs to publicize our Green Movement and continuously look for new ways to educate and inform. In October 2008 we formed a Bay Ridge Brooklyn Green Team which is comprised of local business owners. The goal is to grow this group and educate each other about how to go Green and Green the community.

We also look to reactions from our customers and the Spa/Wellness community as a way to measure success. Our Green & Feng Shui Design efforts, Expert Therapists, Friendly Staff and Eco Friendly Gift Shop are just a few key reasons why **SKIN INC Magazine named us as a finalist for the BEST GREEN SPA in the USA!**

4. Outcomes and Environmental Benefit:

The impact our program is having on the environment is widespread. Our carbon footprint has been dramatically reduced with respect to conservation of trees alone. We are educating our clients with weekly emails urging them to go green in their efforts. **Word is spreading; we are getting the word out to our 20,000 client base thru education and leading by example.** Our staff has grown to over 65 workers whose lives have been dramatically impacted.

Notably, our guests and travelers limit their carbon footprint when they sip our tea, flush our toilets and learn about other local green groups we work with such as CEDC/Center for Ergonomics of Developing Countries (www.cedc.info), Sustainable Business Network for New York City/SBNYC (www.sbnyc.org), etc. Again, we are setting a great example for others to follow!

5. Relevance to Traveler or Travel Industry

During the last 6 months we have actively marketed Green Spa NY to the travel industry. We have joined forces with ALON Marketing (tourism consultants representing Brooklyn Tourism and Green Spa NY among others) and Brooklyn Tourism (Brooklyn's DMO) to offer Green Spa NY products and services to visitors to Brooklyn. Brooklyn is a thriving diverse destination within NYC that is top of mind in the travel press, with NYC and Co, and has a unique, hip, historic, and dynamic offering for visitors to NYC. By promoting GREEN SPA NY within various tourism professional networks and by holding "open houses/FAM tours", we are educating visitors and tour wholesalers not only about Brooklyn and a relaxing spa visit option, but also about how to engage green living into their lives and combine Green Spa NY with their visit to Brooklyn and NYC.

We have created tour packages combining Green Spa NY services with local cultural attractions in Brooklyn. The following are examples that we have created with the travel community in mind and all of these **tour packages** can be booked through Green Spa NY:

- Green Spa NY a la carte voucher packages for FIT free-sale and custom groups:
 - Green Spa NY Art and Day Spa (*Gallery 364 Art Gallery*)
 - Green Spa NY Golf and Spa Packages (*Dyker Heights Golf Course*)
 - Green Spa NY Princess for a Day
 - Green Spa NY Revival Duo
 - Green Spa NY The Look
 - Green Spa NY Green Spa Escape
 - Green Spa NY Mini Spa Sampler
 - Green Spa NY Sushi and Cigar Rolling Men's Package
 - Green Spa NY Feng Shui Spa Day and Technical Tours (*learn how Green Spa NY is Green*)
 - Green Spa NY Spa and Jet packages (*for visitors and/or groups arriving or departing through JFK***)
 - Green Spa NY Spa and Neighborhood Historical Tour (*Verrazano Bridge & Bay Ridge History*)
 - Green Spa NY Spa and Sail Package (*Combine Green Spa NY with an outing on one of the Manhattan by Sail sailboats which has a magnificent fleet in NY available for corporate/special events*)
 - Green Spa NY 'Go Green' All Brooklyn Tour Package (*A unique green tour package with Brooklyn Children's Museum, Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, and Brooklyn's Prospect Park*)
 - Green Spa NY Catering Menu - HOM organic tea and wine garden menu for Spa events

Using **Green Spa NY Feng Shui Spa Day and Technical Tours** as an example; we are "teaching and changing people" with this type of tour. Given that participants will primarily be comprised of travelers and those interested in learning how to accomplish some of what we have achieved, it is another step forward in our process!

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Our series of packages also offers “Spa and Jet**” as a relaxing option before or after flying and caters to travelers departing/arriving to NYC through the nearby JFK airport. All of these packages are promoted to DMC’s and Incentive tour operators, receptive tour operators, domestic and international tour operators as a unique and relaxing break while they are in NYC for leisure, conferences or VFR. All of these packages have been extremely well received. A very recent comment from West Coast receptive operator Sharia Ness of Go West Travel was *“These descriptions look great! I want to try all of them myself!”*

The relevance of our program and services to the traveler and the travel industry is systemic to all travelers today. The touch points are acute. People travel to *get away from it all, visit new places, relax, learn new cultures, see the world we live in, visit the number one city in the world NYC, etc..* When they visit Brooklyn NYC and Green Spa NY, they naturally relax while enjoying our services, but are also reminded to be aware of our environments fragility and that everyone and every business has a role to play. Our approach resonates with them and is doubly effective in reaching the minds of these travelers because when they visit Green Spa NY our missions and visions are easily absorbed into their relaxed minds.

6 Real-World Example

A real world example of our ‘Project in action’ is the combining of the Green Spa NY spa services with other green community businesses to create a Green tour package for the traveler and ‘travel trade’ to sell. This Green tour package directly addresses the ‘Green travel buzz.’ We are embracing upon other businesses to see and feel the impact we can have by working together towards a common goal. Included in this package with Green Spa NY are:

- **Brooklyn Botanic Garden** (www.bbg.org) is a premier horticultural attraction in the USA and features a tranquil, 52-acre urban oasis with more than 10,000 different kinds of plants from around the world.
- **Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment** (www.bcue.org) is dedicated to educating individuals about the built and natural environments of New York City. Since 1978, the Center has helped define urban environmental education in New York City and conducts over 50 tours each year as guides lead you on fascinating explorations of New York City's neighborhoods and natural places.
- **Brooklyn Children’s Museum** (www.brooklynkids.org) is the first children’s museum in the world and has just completed an amazing, eco-friendly expansion project! The Museum is now equipped to provide 21st-century learning adventures for growing numbers of children from the neighborhoods of New York City, the greater metropolitan region, and beyond. The Museum has doubled in size and incorporates the latest innovations in high performance architecture. **It is slated to be the first "green" museum in New York City.**
- **Prospect Park** (www.prospectpark.org) is a 585-acre urban oasis located in the heart of Brooklyn. The masterpiece of famed landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, who also designed Central Park, Prospect Park features the 90-acre Long Meadow, the 60-acre Lake and Brooklyn’s only forest. With over eight million visitors a year, the Park borders diverse neighborhoods and attracts both locals and tourists.

Again, we are hoping that others can see how creativity and perseverance can educate and move people to think and act differently.

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Another example of our “Program in action” is to visualize a group of travel and tourism professionals attending a **GREEN SPA NY OPEN HOUSE**. As they take the Green Spa NY tour, read all of our proclamations, are enchanted with what they see and they begin to ask questions, book business, and change their thinking and way they live. Often you can literally feel the excitement as people see a positive goal being realized. **Among other key community members at our Grand Opening (see photos below) was Brooklyn Borough President, Marty Markowitz.**

Most importantly, we are hoping we serve as an example of how, by striving for a seemingly unattainable goal, that not only benefits the environment, it also benefits our business, and delivers an enormous sense of pride!! If Green Spa NY could achieve all this without any prior knowledge of how to GO GREEN, we feel others, your business included, can as well!!

**** 4/22/08****

**GREEN SPA NY owners; Shelia, Maria and Maureen;
Accepting a proclamation from
Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz!**



**** 4/22/08 ****

Ribbon cutting at GREEN SPA NY!



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