



## Greening the Destination

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### 1. Overview

Travel Portland is the destination marketing organization for Portland, Oregon. Its mission is to strengthen the region's economy by marketing the metropolitan Portland area as a preferred destination for meetings, conventions and leisure travel.

Travel Portland's "Greening the Destination" project works on two main fronts:

#### A. Operational:

- Make the agency's internal operations more sustainable
- Educate partner businesses about sustainable business practices

#### B. Promotional:

- Launched a coordinated marketing plan to promote Portland as the leading destination for green meetings (see details under "Program Establishment/Green Meetings below).
- Created a public relations manager, sustainability position to serve as an expert resource to media increasingly interested in this aspect of travel
- Increased our promotion of green leisure travel (see details under "Program Establishment/Marketing/Public Relations/Leisure Travel below).

### History:

Although sustainability has always been an important goal for Portland, Travel Portland's efforts in this area gained additional momentum following the recruitment of the US Green Building Council's 2004 convention.

In 2003, Travel Portland partnered with the hospitality community to create and present a comprehensive green-meeting proposal for this convention.

Travel Portland also created an internal "Green Team" to ensure that the organization was "walking the talk" and to further promote sustainability efforts within the hospitality industry.

## **2. Program Establishment**

### **A. Operational:**

- Travel Portland's Green Team was begun with the mission to assist in fulfilling one of Travel Portland's most important value statements: *"to promote and market the region in a way that maximizes the visitor's experience while respecting both the environment and exceptional quality of life enjoyed by local residents."*
- All of Travel Portland's departments are encouraged to assign a staff member to the Green Team.
- Initially, the Green Team's efforts centered on achieving a BlueWorks (now called RecycleWorks) Award from the City of Portland's Office of Sustainable Development. This award recognizes businesses whose commitment to sustainable operations and practices rises above and beyond traditional recycling.
  - This program provided an initial audit of Travel Portland's operations, as well as recommendations for improvements necessary to achieve the award.
  - Travel Portland earned the BlueWorks Award in April, 2006.

### **B. Promotional:**

#### **Green Meetings**

- Travel Portland's Sales and Convention team worked with industry partners to create a green package that included a large convention block of Green Seal-certified hotel rooms and the LEED-certified Oregon Convention Center.

- The Sales and Convention team also created an annual “Green Fam” (familiarization trip) initially for meeting planners representing associations within environmental market segment. Current fam tours are open to any meeting planner from any meeting segment who is interested in holding more sustainable meetings.
- Travel Portland applied for and received a grant from the local Visitor Development Fund to create a coordinated green-targeted marketing campaign that included:
  - Target database development
  - Electronic direct-mail programs
  - Events for key convention planners in major markets
  - Cooperative advertising in major environmental/convention publications
  - Additional Green Fams
- Our organization sponsored two Webinars (online educational seminars) on green meetings
- The agency is currently developing an online Green Meeting Tool Kit whose components will include:
  - Green meetings 101 (making green meetings easy)
  - General green meeting resources
  - Links to local and national experts, including the Oregon Convention Center’s sustainability manager
  - Link to a carbon calculator
  - History of Portland’s “green DNA.”
- Travel Portland’s Communications team is currently developing an electronic bid book that will replace printing of thousands of sheets of paper.

#### Marketing/Public Relations/Leisure Travel

- The Communications Department’s public relations manager,

sustainability serves as a resource for journalists seeking to write travel articles on Portland that include a green or sustainable angle. This position also seeks to incorporate green messaging into general travel articles, and researches sustainable elements and story ideas within the community

- The Marketing department works with local industry partners to promote green-themed travel packages and activities.
- Tourism Sales managers works with tour operators and local partners to generate sustainable tour itineraries.
- Communications and Tourism department initiatives include:
  - Using flash drives to disseminate information and media kits at trade shows, saving hundreds of thousands of sheets of paper and shipping resources
  - Providing clients with refillable water bottles, as opposed to bottled water.
  - Using recycled packing materials for shipments
  - Using energy-efficient modes of transportation (biodiesel-powered shuttles, hybrid cars, public transportation) for Fam-tours.

### **3. Goals & Benchmarking**

#### A. Operational:

- Goal: Achieve RecycleWorks certification (includes aggressive recycling program; sustainable purchasing policy; purchase of renewable power; use of recycled-content paper and soy-based ink for printed materials; encouragement for staff to use mass transit or commute by bicycle)
  - Award earned in April 2006
- Goal: Further reduce and/or offset carbon emissions, waste production, and energy use
  - Ongoing

- Goal: Improve sustainability of business operations within the tourism/hospitality industry throughout the region and establish the industry as a critical piece of an economy oriented toward sustainability
  - Travel Portland's Green Team and Partnership Services Department educate and encourage industry businesses to achieve sustainability certification and make that information available to customers:
    - Sustainable partner education events held twice yearly
    - 50 Travel Portland partner businesses so far have achieved a sustainability certification and are listed in a special green business section of our website
  - Travel Portland's staff participate in sustainability-themed events throughout the community to showcase the industry's efforts and successes
    - Portland Park(ing) Day
    - Go Green Conference

#### B. Promotional:

- Goal: Generate additional meeting and convention business
  - 2000-2005: booked 111,300 total room nights specific to the green market (average 18,550 per year)
  - 2006-2007: booked 44,280 room nights specific to the green market (average 22,140 per year)
  - 2007 bookings from Green Fam: 11 groups representing a combined 27,270 room nights, 15,485 attendees and \$14,870,581 in economic impact
  - 2008 bookings to date from Green Fam: 14 groups representing a combined 19,589 room nights, 10,845 attendees and \$15,829,000 economic impact
  - Developing a tracking program with hotels to monitor green business not booked through Travel Portland.

- Goal: Establish Portland as the leading sustainable travel destination
  - Named as #1 “Best Place to Meet Green” by Meeting Strategies Worldwide
  - Hosting 2009 International Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference
  - Partnering with Metro Regional Government on the Connect Green program to create a world-class system of parks and greenspaces
  - Advocating for sustainable transportation: participating on Portland Bicycle Master Plan steering committee and the Sustainability Subcommittee of the Portland Airport Futures project; advocating for additional transit options, including expansion of the Portland Streetcar and MAX light rail lines
  - Sponsoring Convene Green, a resource website for meeting planners, and participating actively in several major online resource, publications, or blogs on the topic of sustainable travels.

#### **4. Outcomes & Environmental Benefit**

##### A. Operational:

- The purchase of renewable energy for both office operations and Travel Portland’s website prevents 16,000 pounds of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere yearly.
- Travel Portland staff bicycled 465 miles during the 2008 Bicycle Commute Challenge, preventing .23 tons of carbon emissions in one month. Many staff members continue to commute by bicycle and/or public transit.
- The purchase of hybrid vehicles for staff use has prevented approximately 2.5 metric tons of CO2 emissions per year due to improved gas mileage.

##### B. Promotional:

- See green meetings stats above
- Media coverage

- 2008-2009 YTD: generated 49 articles highlighting sustainability in Portland
  - 35.5% of all articles placed
  - \$1,938,848 combined total media value
- Tracking of leisure travel coming to Portland due to sustainable promotion/reputation is extremely difficult—it would require expensive surveying. The same issue rises when tracking any reduction in visitor footprint. Travel Portland is in discussions with hotels to try to develop a tracking system, but tracking seems to be much easier for meetings than for leisure travel.

## **5. Relevance to Traveler or Travel Industry**

- Travel Portland has partnered with leaders of the local hospitality industry to move the industry as a whole forward on the sustainability path, and to ensure that meeting planners and leisure travelers who are concerned about their travel footprint are aware of the many ways in which Portland can help them to maximize their experience while minimizing their impact.
- In addition, the agency is working with international partners (International Ecotourism Society, Sustainable Travel International, U.S. Travel Association) to improve the sustainability of the hospitality industry worldwide.
- Customers inquire increasingly about sustainable travel and sustainable businesses. Travel Portland's program offers them increased options for meeting their travel needs while supporting their sustainability goals.

## **6. Real-World Example**

The Unitarian Universalist Association brought its 2007 general assembly to Portland specifically because of Portland's commitment to sustainability. Meeting planner Jan Sneegas partnered with Meeting Strategies Worldwide, Travel Portland, the Oregon Convention Center and the hotel community to ensure the UUA's green practices guidelines were met. These clauses include specific actions that promote energy efficiency, air and water quality, water conservation, waste minimization, and environmental purchasing. In addition, the Unitarian Universalist Association took advantage of the Oregon Convention Center's composting and recycling options, and hired personnel at the sustainability stations to make sure that composting and recycling was not contaminated, resulting in a diversion rate of more than 70%.

Attracting the meeting was very beneficial for Portland: It brought more than 5,700 attendees who used 9,300 hotel room nights, and resulted in an estimated economic impact of more than \$4.2 million.

A recent *MeetingsNet* article highlighting Jan Sneegas said that “some cities are green for specific meetings. Portland is green every day.”