



THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER®



Case Study: The Greening of The National Conference Center

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Meeting grounds that offer 110 scenic acres and an escape from the city hustle, the busy workplace, and chaos at home translate into a conference center that provides your group with the power of education and training. The National Conference Center (NCC) serves as a sanctuary meeting place for groups that will come as many but leave as one. Though the building's focal point extends beyond this notion; the conference center impels people to unite and conserve our environmental resources. As one of the largest conference centers in the US, The National Conference Center's corporate social responsibility is to minimize their environmental impact.

Originally developed as the Xerox Training Center, this 1,200,000 square foot property expands over 110 acres in Loudoun County, Virginia, 35 miles west of DC. Since the opening of the facility in 1974, ARAMARK has provided property management services for guests and employees. The center offers affordable and flexible conference meeting packages to corporate Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, religious groups, and non-profit associations. With 917 guest rooms and more than 250 meeting rooms, The National Conference Center can have as many as 18,000 guests a month. Like other sizable properties with heavy foot-traffic, NCC utilizes a large amount of water and energy in addition to generating an excess of waste products. In the early 90's, Xerox employees at the conference center began advocating for sustainable practices on the property by recycling waste products and turning off computers and lights. After the facility was purchased by Oxford Capital Investments, employees began looking for new ways to be green. This led to the National Conference Center's environmental conservation plan, which is comprised of four general areas: resource management, housekeeping, food and beverage, and facilities.

Efforts were first implemented in the offices at NCC. For instance, all print-materials were converted into online brochures and the tag line, "Please consider the environment before printing this email," was added to all emails to reduce paper consumption. The National Conference Center also made the decision to use sustainable office materials, meaning suppliers must be local and manufacture in a green way. At NCC, paper is composed of 30% post consumer content, and printers and copiers are equipped with recycled cartridges and ribbons. NCC has traded dated electronics for Energy-Star certified appliances such as TVs, vacuums, computers, copiers, fax machines, and projectors, all which conserve energy and make less of an environmental impact. The conference center recycled the older appliances in their single stream recycling system which recycles glass, plastic, aluminum, metal, wood, cardboard, and paper. In 2009, the conference center recycled a total of 85 tons, with a diversion rate of 19% for recycled material and a 27% improvement over the prior year.

At hotels, lodging properties and conference centers, it's common to ask guests to help conserve water and energy. NCC established an active bed linen and towel reuse program, communicated to guests on small information cards located in every guest room; this conserves water use from washing machines and energy use from dryers. There are also low flow toilets and showers in the guest rooms as well as low flow sink aerators, which greatly reduced water consumption. In 2009, The National Conference Center was able to save over two million gallons of water. Recently, NCC replaced all 917 coffee brewers in the guest rooms with new single cup brewers. The new brewers are projected to save up to 50,000 gallons of water in the first year; the newer model brewers have also the added benefits of being more energy efficient and reducing coffee waste.

The property found significant utility cost savings and energy conservation in eliminating unnecessary energy. Meeting and guest rooms contain sensors that track periods of inactivity so the HVAC will only run when the room is occupied. Additionally, meeting rooms contain motion sensors that control the lighting as well as programmable thermostats that reduce the run time of the HVAC units. Housekeepers are trained to turn off lights and TV's in the guestrooms after servicing them. These programs conserve energy and essentially save money for the conference center.

In occupied spaces, energy consumption can easily be reduced with green materials. Energy-efficient light bulbs require less electricity and create utility savings. The National Conference Center is on

the third year of a five year plan to replace all lights with energy-efficient light bulbs. During 2009, 2680 standard bulbs were replaced with energy-efficient CFL bulbs. The staff has also been asked to eliminate their elevator usage unless traveling with 12 lbs or more. Assuming two-thirds of employees travel by stairs 4 or more times a day, NCC saves \$750 annually. To significantly conserve water and energy, the property closes during slow business like the December holiday season. As a result of these energy saving steps, The National Conference Center was able to reduce total energy consumption by 10% in 2009, a reduction of 2,640,000 kilo watt hours.

To increase the number of biodegradable products used, businesses must look beyond the “green seal” label on their cleaning products. NCC’s housekeeping department takes into the proximity of the manufacturer and how environmentally-friendly the supplier is from warehousing to logistics. Most of the property has converted to more sustainable equipment; NCC’s paper towels and paper towel dispensers were traded in for more local eco-friendly products. The new automatic paper towel dispensers are only dispensing 1 recycled paper towel at a time to reduce consumption. NCC uses one multi-purpose biodegradable cleaner rather than multiple cleaning products and most recently switched to an eco-friendly dish washing detergent. Simple modifications such as these allow The National Conference Center to decrease transportation pollution and harmful chemicals in the environment.

Dining quality is often measured in sustainability initiatives. At NCC, dining services has employed several food and beverage sustainability initiatives. All Styrofoam products were purged along with plastic serving utensils and replaced with recyclable products to reduce waste tonnage. In addition, all staff has been asked to use water bottles rather than disposable cups, an estimated savings of \$2,000. To minimize waste, break stations throughout the property feature bulk snacks in large glass containers rather than individual packages. Bulk dispensers for condiments, beverages and salad dressings are used in the dining room and on break stations. The dining room is also setup with buffet-style services so guests may take quantities they desire and eliminate excess waste of pre-plated meals. These dining initiatives eliminate waste products, increase recycling, and conserve water and energy.

The Farm-to-Table initiative is a growing concept in the hospitality industry as it encourages the purchase of locally harvested fruits and vegetables. NCC purchases a portion of their fruits and vegetables from local vendors within 150 miles. By using local Virginia farms, this promotes stewardship

of the land and requires less transportation, which combats global climate change and decreases the carbon footprint. The conference center also integrates sustainable seafood initiatives, such as the Seafood Watch Program to conserve fishery resources and promote the use of locally caught fish. NCC has pledged to use local resources when possible, remove selected fish from their menus and not purchase over-fished seafood. Farm-to-Table and the Seafood Watch Program conserve resources and ensure guests receive the best quality.

Traveling in vehicles with high-emission fuels impact air quality and increase pollution. The National Conference Center's transportation system strives to decrease their impact on the environment. The center provides shuttle service to and from the airport and local shopping centers and attractions, which eliminates multiple cars and taxis from consuming energy and generating pollution. When transporting smaller groups, NCC uses smaller buses or vans to limit the effects on the environment. At the forefront of self-sustainability, The National Conference Center sends 100% of their fryer oil to Valley Protein to create biodiesel fuel, cosmetics, and more. By converting BIO 20 diesel fuel, newer vehicles are able to run on Bio-Diesel fuel during the warmer months – an estimated diversion of 1300 gallons per year.

Today, facilities strive to gain a green certification. New hotel construction incorporates green building materials to ensure the property is environmentally friendly, while older facilities are developing new ways to meet the standards. The National Conference Center began their green initiatives years before becoming "Green Seal" certified. The history of greening at The National Conference Center travels back to the 90's and extends through the 2000's. In 2004, NCC began looking into the "Green Seal" certification. When NCC realized that most of the standards for the certification were already implemented on the property, a few additions were made to the environmental plan to fully qualify the facility. In 2005, The National Conference Center was awarded the "Green Seal" certification.

The corporate social responsibility of ARAMARK is to continually improve the environment and quality of life on their properties around the world. In 2007, ARAMARK began tracking their environmental metrics and requested for The National Conference Center to gather data about their property. After calculating the property's water and energy consumption, employees at NCC became inspired to make

more environmentally conscious decisions. In this way, 2007 marked the real beginning of going green at The National Conference Center. ARAMARK extended these values to their properties by encouraging them participate in environmental-friendly practices, such as water and energy conservation, green cleaning products, local sustainable food, and waste management. In 2008, Tim Fletcher, the Director of Operations at The National Conference Center was nominated co-chair of the environmental sustainability plan for all ARAMARK conference centers. ARAMARK created "Green Thread," an environmental stewardship program to inform guests of the positive impact ARAMARK properties are making on the environment as well as providing practical solutions to assist them in doing the same. ARAMARK has been awarded EPA's "Green Power Partnership" award for exemplary green power procurement. Through this award, ARAMARK has joined an elite group of Green Power Partners who are demonstrating environmental leadership.

The National Conference Center continues to brainstorm future environmental ideas to integrate. Most recently, the conference center designated 12 new hybrid parking spaces for low-emission vehicles. These preferred spaces are an incentive to guests with environmentally-friendly vehicles. Additionally, associates who carpool to work with 3 or more passengers are rewarded with preferred parking spots. Other planned initiatives over the next five years include a new energy management system for meeting space, composting, rain water harvesting, sub metering cooling towers, LEED certification self assessment, installation of photo cells in naturally lit areas, a light bulb crusher, replacing single pane windows with energy efficient windows, and tinting all window skylights. These initiatives are reasonably obtainable for the property and will continue to help conserve water and energy in the four key areas of their environmental plan.

As a leader in their industry, The National Conference Center is committed to environmental stewardship to protect the planet and its resources. By instilling these values in their employees and guests, The National Conference Center has received a number of awards for their eco-friendly practices. In 2009, The National Conference Center's "Green Seal" certification was upgraded to "Silver" status, which they continue to maintain today. In 2009 and 2010, the conference center was nominated for the Washington Business Journal's Green Company of The Year. For the past two years, NCC has

participated in Loudoun County's Green Business Challenge. The National Conference Center is also a member of the Virginia Green Association and the International Association of Conference Center (IACC) which requires a signed Code of Sustainability. Lastly, for the past four years, NCC has hosted an annual Earth Day event. This past April, NCC employees, students from West Belmont Place Middle School, and volunteers from Blue Ridge Wildlife Center came together to help clean up the property's 110 wooded acres and share ways of being green. Awards and programs such as these help educate clients and businesses on practical green solutions and set the way for others to be environmentally-friendly.