



Community Environmental Council

Green Business Case Study

Sustainability makes good business sense

Santa Ynez Valley Marriott

SANTA YNEZ



Photo: Daniel Girard – GBP

- Water baseline (2008):** 10.9 million gallons
- Water saved:** 10.4%
- Water cost savings (per room):** 10.2%
- Electricity baseline (2008):** 1,990 kW
- Electricity saved:** 6.7%
- Electricity cost savings (per room):** 10%
- Natural gas baseline (2008):** 113,930 therms
- Natural gas saved:** <1%
- Natural gas cost savings (per room):** 38%¹
- Money saved (per year):** \$15,000 to \$20,000

¹Significant decreases in the cost of natural gas lead to these savings.

First and foremost, Mike Hendrick, General Manager of the Santa Ynez Valley Marriott is a businessman. When he signed up to participate in the Santa Barbara County Green Business Program, it was to save money. What he did not expect was how the program would change his mind about running a sustainable business, one that protects the planet, people, and profit.

Since entering the program in February 2009, the Santa Ynez Valley Marriott has taken measures to conserve water and energy, reduce how much solid waste and pollution it generates, and make more environmentally friendly purchasing decisions. The hotel gained its certification in November 2009, but it continues to implement changes today -- making it not only Santa Barbara County's first certified Green Hotel, but also one of the leading Green Businesses in the area.

"I think landscaping has got to be our biggest change," says Hendrick. "We embarked on a very aggressive landscaping program where we removed about 80 percent of our existing landscaping -- such as non-grass areas, bushes and shrubs -- and replaced those with the native stuff."

To help manage what little irrigation the hotel does use, landscapers installed a simple rain sensor, costing just \$24. The property also now boasts 10 young apple trees that will soon be producing fruit for the hotel's staff and guests. Since certification, the hotel has taken out another lawn and replaced it with a bocce ball court.

Other water saving changes in the guest rooms include installing low-flow faucets in all of the bathrooms (low-flow shower heads were already installed), adjusting the toilets to reduce them to 1.3 gallons



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per flush from 1.6 gallons, and providing informational cards in all of the rooms to remind guests how much water is saved by reusing towels.

Although the water-saving initiatives have been the most expensive changes (once completed the landscaping alterations will cost \$10,000 to \$12,000), they also reaped the most impressive results. In 2009, the hotel used a staggering 1.3 million gallons less water than it did in 2007 and is saving over \$7,000 a year on water.

The Santa Ynez Valley Marriott has also been making strides in energy reduction. Through a program offered by PG&E, the hotel replaced over 280 lighting fixtures for free. Through this retrofit, the lighting throughout the hotel is now 40 percent more efficient. Installing programmable



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thermostats in the guest rooms, decreasing water heating temperature, and insulating major hot water pipes led to further efficiency gains. These changes resulted in over 10 percent reduction in electricity cost per room, and over 38 percent reduction in gas cost per room in 2009.

To keep staff involved, Hendrick posts the monthly utility consumption on the bulletin board in the employee area. The hotel's staff is also encouraged to conserve energy

by carpooling; each day an employee carpools, his or her name is entered into a monthly raffle for a gift card of their choice.

To address waste generation, the hotel has been making many small changes in the way it does business. One easy change was to stop printing certain weekly reports; they are now emailed and one copy is posted on the bulletin board. The hotel is working to emulate this practice for nightly reports, potentially saving over 650 sheets of paper per day. In addition, blue recycling bins dot the property, and staff and hotel patrons alike are greatly encouraged to recycle. Hendrick knows that "If you can involve your guests in what you're doing, it's going to be successful."

The hotel is also focusing on environmentally preferable purchasing to directly and indirectly minimize the waste going to landfill. As an example, all of the

paper items used in the rooms is now made of recycled content. And the health club, remodeled in June 2010, boasts a floor made of recycled tires.

The Santa Ynez Valley Marriott is pleased with the results of the program. "When we're all done with this, we'll probably be saving an average of \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year through a reduction in energy use, waste generation with trash pickups, water usage, copy paper reduction, etc.," Hendrick says. "I'm a conservative guy. I think that business people should run their businesses the way they see fit, and this is a good business decision."