

MIDDLETOWN GREEN BUSINESS INITIATIVE

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Laura Masulis
Tanya Moss
Miller Nuttle
Paolo Speirn

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This program could not have happened without the generous support of the many business owners and community members who provided us with information, advice, and knowledge. To them we give our thanks.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background Information

This project aimed to facilitate environmentally responsible business practices in Middletown. A group of four Wesleyan students was commissioned by the Jonah Center for Earth and Art to complete this project as part of the Community Research Seminar class. The student researchers interviewed Middletown business owners and environmental leaders to develop a checklist of green business practices. Based on feedback from businesses, the research group expanded the project to create a comprehensive Middletown Green Business Initiative.

Methodology

- In-depth in-person interviews with ten businesses.
- Conversations with environmental leaders throughout the research process.
- Pre-testing of Green Practice Inventory combined with open-ended interviews with six businesses.
- Research of other municipal green business program.

Major Findings

- Environmentally responsible business practices are possible and practical in Middletown. In fact, many businesses are already using resources available to them to reduce their environmental impact.
- There are significant barriers to wider implementation of green practices: businesses feel as though they are operating in isolation, information is not readily available to them, and many issues seem to be structural and therefore outside of individual business's control.
- Greening Middletown would require a comprehensive program, not merely a standard for businesses. Businesses were more receptive to the idea of a Green Practice Inventory accompanied by a coordinator to work alongside them to develop an action plan for implementing the green practices.
- In general, successful municipal green business programs involve partnerships between non-profits, business owners, city government, the Chamber of Commerce, and energy companies.

Final Products

We have developed the Middletown Green Business Initiative, a two-part program to help Middletown become more environmentally sustainable. It includes:

- 1) *Green Practice Inventory (GPI)* – This document consists of a rubric of business practices, all feasible in Middletown, which businesses can implement in order to reduce their environmental impact. Businesses can implement these practices based on their size, type, and financial resources (see Appendix B for complete GPI).
- 2) *Resource Website* – www.thejonahcenter.org/greenbusiness
This website, accessible through the Jonah Center's website, provides a number of resources for Middletown businesses. The website provides links to environmentally responsible websites with information on procurement, transportation, water use, energy use, and waste

management. Also included on the site are testimonies from local Middletown business owners who have already developed green business practices.

Green Business Initiative: Recommendations for the Future

The Green Practice Inventory and Resource Website are both useful steps towards a greener Middletown. These recommendations will help ensure a successful future for the project.

- 1) *Green Business Initiative Coordinator:* The coordinator would meet with business owners to discuss the business' current practices and, with the help of the Green Practice Inventory, would work with the business owner to develop a customized plan of action. The Coordinator would be in charge of keeping the Green Business Initiative functioning by seeking out new business members, evaluating the effectiveness of the program, and maintaining regular and open communication with the City, the Chamber of Commerce, businesses, and the public.
- 2) *Local Alliances:* Linking up with the Chamber of Commerce would make sure that the initiative was in tune with the needs of the business community. Partnering with the City of Middletown is also imperative if the Green Business Initiative is to become a citywide program. If the City of Middletown, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Green Business Initiative were able to pool their resources and connect their programs effectively, the entire Middletown community would benefit.
- 3) *Expansion and Customization:* With the addition of new businesses, the program could quickly expand geographically and account for a larger variety of organizations, including hospitals, schools, factories, churches, non-profit organizations, corporations, and property management companies. Due to the diversity of organizations, the inventory list and resource guide should be customized for different types of businesses.
- 4) *Business-to-Business Green Advisory Network:* A business-to-business advising network allows businesses to share information about green practices, and would also allow businesses interested in "going green" to have a guiding mentor. The green business coordinator could have a hand in the exchange in order to make sure the information being provided is worthwhile and up to date.
- 5) *Green Certification:* Businesses could be awarded "green seals" based on their performance in each category of the Green Practice Inventory. The establishment of such a certification program would challenge businesses to commit to minimizing their environmental impact and bring positive attention to the businesses already engaging in green practices.

Conclusion

Environmentally responsible business in Middletown is happening now and has immense possibility for growth. We believe our project has laid the groundwork for a comprehensive initiative that will not only reduce environmental impact, but also be financially beneficial for the businesses community and Middletown as a whole. We hope that the Green Business Initiative will provide the tools to help Middletown become a leader in environmental sustainability in Connecticut.

If you are interested in getting involved with the Middletown Green Business Initiative, or would like an update on its progress, contact John Hall, executive director of the Jonah Center (hall.john.c@sbcglobal.net) or student researcher Paolo Speirn (pspeirn@wesleyan.edu).

INTRODUCTION

“How will the pressures of climate change, limited fossil fuel resources and the mainstreaming of ‘green’ consciousness reshape society?” asks the New York Times’ blog on energy, environment, and the bottom line.¹ Many cities around the country are responding to such questions by developing green¹ business programs to help make their cities more environmentally sustainable. Here in Middletown, a small team of student researchers worked in collaboration with the Jonah Center for Earth and Art to lay the groundwork for a local Green Business Program.

The Jonah Center, an environmental advocacy organization led by John Hall, has previously partnered with both the City of Middletown and Wesleyan University on projects such as renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives, green building and landscape design, and environmental studies.² The Jonah Center has also promoted home energy audits for area residents, worked to preserve open space and farmland in Middletown, and conducted outdoor education programs for local schools and the general public. Most recently, The Jonah Center has become increasingly interested in working with the local business community to develop a green business initiative for Middletown.ⁱⁱ

The long-term vision for this project is to develop a network and infrastructure (e.g., green practice inventory, website, product sourcing, energy service partnerships, etc.) that would help business owners reduce energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions, recognize existing green businesses, and help and encourage other businesses to adopt environmentally responsible practices.

¹ Here and throughout our paper, we use the term green to refer to environmentally responsible practices – i.e., practices that allow businesses to incorporate the sustainable use of resources into their business models. While the term is inherently vague, we find that it is the easiest way to encompass a wide range of environmentally responsible practices and philosophies.

² To View these reports, visit the Wesleyan Service Learning Center (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/slc/>) and click “Wesleyan Produced Reports.”

As part of Wesleyan University's Community Research Seminar, we were given the task of developing an "assessment standard" – a checklist of environmentally responsible practices with two goals: first, to assess common barriers to, and opportunities in, adopting green practices among local business owners; and, second, to set green practice standards for Middletown intended to encourage green practices and publicize businesses with a demonstrated commitment to sustainability. By speaking to ten local business owners who were making strides towards sustainable practice, conducting research on green business practice standards in other municipalities and meeting with local environmentalists, we developed an assessment standard for Middletown.

As our work progressed, however, it became evident that the assessment standard format is somewhat reductive and oftentimes subjective, making it hard for an assessment standard to stand alone. With this in mind, we restructured the information we had gathered into a green practice *inventory* – a list of green "best practices" for area businesses. This document will help shape a future assessment standard to be developed by the Jonah Center. Provided adequate funding and personnel in the future, a representative of the Jonah Center will administer this standard to local business, developing an action plan of key steps that each business can take to reduce their environmental impact.

Our project also sought to amass resources to support local businesses going green, and eventually meeting the requirements of our future assessment standard. In collaboration with the Jonah Center, we created a website of services, tax credits, and incentives available to local business owners. Along with these resources, the site features testimony from business owners underscoring the cost efficiency of going green.

Following the lead of other successful green business networks, we sought the endorsement of local government and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that these resources were made available to all Middletown businesses. With their connections in the business community, these

organizations will be integral players in supporting and publicizing the green business program, recognizing businesses with commitments to sustainability and integrating sustainable business practice into Middletown's broader image. We think that Middletown has great potential to become a leader in green business (to the best of our knowledge, no other green business network exists in Connecticut). By furnishing resources and opening lines of communication and support between business owners, city government and the Chamber of Commerce, we hope our report helps business owners cut costs, reduce their environmental impact, and contribute to Middletown's status as an environmental leader.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is Green Business?

The idea of “green business” is relatively new in the history of American environmentalism. The concept was not broadly accepted or practiced until the 1990s, when businesses began to be viewed by environmentalists as crucial allies, rather than barriers, in winning environmental victories. Paul Hawken, author of *The Ecology of Commerce and Natural Capitalism*, was among the first to argue for the importance of business involvement in mitigating humans’ environmental impact. “[Industrial capitalism],” he argues, “neglects to assign any value to the largest stocks of capital it employs—the natural resources and living systems, as well as the social and cultural systems that are the basis of human capital.”ⁱⁱⁱ If this “natural” capital fails to be incorporated in our bottom line, he notes, our economic system will quickly exhaust the raw materials on which it depends.

Businesses, and small businesses in particular, (defined by having fewer than 500 employees) are crucial players in revolutionizing our economic system for several reasons. While their individual impact may seem small compared to major industry, small businesses, which represent 99.9% of all businesses in the US, account for over half of the natural gas and electricity consumed by the commercial and industrial sectors.^{iv}

Fortunately, as Ann Bartz, the director of The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, notes, small businesses “are able to make their own decisions about what types of lighting they want to put in or what types of relations they want to have with other businesses in the community,”^v decisions which influence a chain of production with far-reaching effects on the environment. With direct control over their individual practice, small business owners, given sufficient resources and support, can make environmentally sound decisions about nearly every aspect of their business – a freedom not available within the bureaucracy of larger chains and corporations.

Over the past decade, the concept of green business has become emblematic of a broader shift in environmentalism: the push to meld sustainability with the commercial sector's bottom line. Environmental activist Van Jones stresses the idea of a triple bottom line that balances social and environmental ramifications of business practice with an emphasis on maximizing profit. He argues that "going green" will save businesses money by minimizing waste and energy use while bolstering their public image. Moreover, as part of an economy based on the unsustainable use of finite resources, any business that doesn't broaden its bottom line to include environmental efficiency will soon face the ramifications of a costly shift away from a fossil fuel-based economy.^{vi}

Jones and many other environmental activists view a green commercial economy as the most promising path to sustainability, yet this approach is only one form of environmental activism. Broad environmental change requires efforts on many fronts – including lobbying, education, and personal efforts to mitigate our own impact. Green business is one particularly effective approach due to its ability to minimize environmental impacts while also bolstering the bottom line of businesses.

Green Business Programs: A National Perspective

Sustainable business initiatives are becoming increasingly common in municipalities across the country, from Portland to Orlando to New York City. While they have similar goals of encouraging environmentally responsible business practices, each city takes its own unique approach. Santa Monica's program is run by a non-profit that provides resources, assessments, and green awards to local businesses.^{vii} In Seattle, business owners themselves developed and grew a Climate Partnership, a voluntary pact among employers to take actions to reduce emissions.^{viii} In Rhode Island, the Hospitality and Tourism Association and Department of Environmental Management teamed up to create a Green Certification program to help hotels and restaurants meet

green performance standards.^{ix} In general, successful municipal green business programs involve partnerships between non-profits, business owners, city government, the Chamber of Commerce, and energy companies.

In the early stages, many city programs focus on providing resources for businesses already actively pursuing environmental responsibility. The most popular offerings include green business checklists, free energy audits, one-on-one consultations, and links to local resources in the area. More established city initiatives often include green assessments, awards, or certification programs. The success of such certification programs rely on the positive incentives associated with them, such as free advertising, lower costs, promises of new customers, and the satisfaction of knowing one's business is contributing positively to the community and the environment. Demand for green business certifications has become so high in recent years that there is now a for-profit industry based on certifying businesses as environmentally responsible, bringing up issues of legitimacy, credibility, and objectivity.^x Ideally, green certifications and awards should instead be developed and implemented by a credible organization that has received the input of diverse stakeholders like environmental groups, businesses, and government agencies.^{xi}

Unfortunately, there exists little consensus in the field, and green certification criteria and green business checklists often vary from state to state and city to city. While the main categories of concern, such as waste, energy, and water use remain fairly consistent across the board, the details of the standards remain up for debate. In some cases, certification programs intentionally use different criteria based on location and local factors. For example, water usage might be much more important on a standard in arid California than in other parts of the country. Much of the inconsistency among the standards can also be attributed to the fact that most certification programs are in the pilot stages or only a few years into operation. As a consequence, few programs have yet to evaluate the efficacy of particular measures in decreasing the environmental impact of a business.

Spotlight: Middletown, CT

Middletown, Connecticut, a small city of 47,000 residents, boasts a thriving downtown business district with over 8,500 employees, but currently lacks any sort of formal green business program.^{xii} While individual business owners in Middletown may be engaging in environmentally responsible practices, there has yet to be any collective action in regards to reducing the environmental impact of the business district.

The city does, however, have a comprehensive, award-winning recycling program, collecting many more types of recyclables than the state mandates and recycling over 30% of Middletown's solid waste.^{xiii} As a result of Middletown High School's clean energy leadership, the school received a 2 kW solar photovoltaic system from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund in April of 2006.^{xiv} Moreover, in May 2005, Middletown qualified as Connecticut's first Clean Energy Community when Wesleyan University signed up for 1,000,000 kilowatt hours of clean energy through CTCleanEnergyOptions program.^{xv3} The city of Middletown also joined the SmartPower 20% by 2010 Campaign with local businesses, residents, and institutions signing-up to support the CTCleanEnergyOptions program.

³ The CTCleanEnergyProgram is a collaborative effort directed by the State Department of Public Utilities Control and includes partners such as the Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel, the Connecticut Light & Power Company, the United Illuminating Company, the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund, various non-profit organizations and two clean energy suppliers, Community Energy and Sterling Planet.

METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of our project was to create an assessment standard for environmentally responsible business practice in Middletown. To create the standard, we synthesized information from three sources: local business owners,⁴ local environmentalists, and outside research, especially assessment standards from other municipalities.

Of the three sources, local business owners required the most complex means of gathering information. We did not intend to comprehensively survey sustainable business practices in Middletown, which would have demanded a randomized, representative sample. Rather, we aimed to find out the *best* practices that Middletown's businesses had to offer. To that end, we worked with The Jonah Center and our local environmental contacts to generate a list of 20 environmentally responsible businesses, a purposive sample. We decided to focus on small, Main Street-type businesses, rather than delving into Middletown's industrial sector, for the majority of Middletown's businesses are smaller commercial establishments. The process of creating the list favored businesses engaged in sustainable practices, and those that were in close contact with our community partner (for the limitations of this process, see *Limitations* section on page 14).

In our consent form, we offered businesses anonymity in order to get the most candid information; given the moral weight that some customers attach to environmental practices, businesses explaining their obstacles and failings could have a negative impact on their customer base. Neither their names nor any identifying information are used in connection with the information they provide in interviews. In our report, we present information in a general sense so as to protect those business owners who wish to remain anonymous. We did, however, recognize

⁴ While we refer to our interview respondents as *businesses* throughout this report, our sample pool also included a non-profit agencies and a recreation center. It is our hope that such organizations will be included in Middletown's green business initiative, as they are active members of the city's social and commerce communities. Like businesses, they are also in a position to make environmentally responsible (and cost-effective) choices in their every-day functions.

all of the businesses who participated in our project, at any level, in our final presentation (see Appendix D for the list of business collaborators).

We conducted open-ended, qualitative interviews in rotating pairs with ten businesses in order to make our questions and interviewing process as consistent as possible. Our interview script took a tiered form, letting us modify it to accommodate different businesses while still obtaining similar categories of information. We allowed businesses to highlight their most advanced sustainable programs, then prompted them to speak about five areas that roughly correlated with possible categories of our assessment standard: waste, heating and lighting, water use, transportation, and resource use. (For the full interview script, see Appendix A.) We wanted to give businesses as much room as possible to tell us what *they* thought we should know as we created this assessment standard. An open-ended interview allowed businesses to explain their best practices, their struggles, their aspirations, and allowed them a significant space to give their perspective on sustainable practice in Middletown.

We conducted our background research concurrently with our interviews, focusing specifically on other municipalities' environmental standards. We identified a few comprehensive standards (discussed in our Literature Review on page 10) and divided them into major environmental categories to be combined with the information from our interviews.

While testing our assessment standard, it became clear that in the short term an assessment standard would not be the best way to facilitate sustainable business practice in Middletown. At businesses' urging, we decided to make our assessment standard into a Green Practices inventory (GPI), a tool meant to suggest rather than assess. We incorporated the GPI into a Green Business Initiative, a program developed by working with the Jonah Center, business owners, and local environmentalists. The program is described in detail in the major findings section.

Limitations

We cannot claim to represent the totality of sustainable business practices (nor barriers to them) in Middletown because our sample population was limited to businesses known by our community partner for their commitment to sustainability. While this process limited the overall number of businesses we contacted, we still reached a wide range of business types — including restaurants, retailers, recreation centers, and health organizations — from which we believe we could accurately assess the possibilities for sustainable practices in Middletown. We hope that the information gleaned throughout this study is useful in the implementation of a green business program, and we encourage Middletown to adjust our recommendations as the needs of businesses, citizens, and government evolve.

Due to time limitations, we were also unable to speak to any land or building owners in the course of this study. Building owners have a final say in the electricity purchasing, waste disposal and weatherization of tenant businesses, decisions that have large effects on a business' environmental footprint. Without their input and partnership, a green business program will be unable to address several of the most important facets of sustainable business operation.

MAJOR FINDINGS

This section addresses the major findings of our project and outlines our Green Business Initiative. We will explain the variety of reasons businesses cited for “going green” and describe some of the most exciting and scalable green business practices that are happening in Middletown. We will then discuss some specific barriers to implementing these practices as well as more general barriers business have encountered. We recognize that our report had input from only a small sample of businesses in Middletown, and thus cannot claim to represent Middletown’s entire business community. We can, however, illustrate some trends among our core business group that we believe are useful to Middletown as a whole.

Why Are Middletown Businesses Green?

From our interviews, we found five main reasons that business cited for being green:

Cost-saving: Many practices, especially those focused on energy efficiency, lower costs while helping to reduce a business’ environmental impact. The majority of businesses are striving to reduce their energy costs as a way to go green while saving money.

Green practices inherent in their type of business: About a third of the businesses interviewed spoke about their business being inherently environmentally responsible. Selling used books, “reusing” buildings in historical architecture plans, and selling bikes all exemplify how environmental responsibility can be part and parcel of an organization’s business model.

Attracting customers: One business in particular feels their green image attracts a significant amount of their customers. A green image has a certain cache among some customers, especially as citizens have begun to express concern for the environment through purchasing decisions.

Ethical concerns: Many businesses believe that their environmental practices are “the right thing to do.”

Making the business space less toxic: Some businesses are concerned with the effect their practices have on customers' health. For instance, one restaurant owner uses biodegradable cleaning products as a way to keep from exposing customers and their children to harmful chemicals.

The diversity of reasons for being green has resulted in a wide variety of green practices, making it clear that green business is not only possible in Middletown, but that it is happening already. From recycling menus and installing efficient light bulbs to utilizing renewable power on site, each business owner that we spoke to gave us new insights into the efficient practices possible in Middletown.

Middletown Green Business Practices and Barriers

This section highlights some of the programs that businesses have implemented, then discusses barriers they identified that prevent them and other businesses from doing more.

Responsible Procurement

Many of the businesses we talked to incorporate environmentally responsible product purchasing into their business plans. Following the growing popularity of the local foods movement, several of Middletown's restaurants have begun stocking local and organic produce. Many also utilize low-impact cleaning products, while others utilize recycled furniture and carpets. However, for most business owners the cost of sourcing environmentally responsible or local products was prohibitively high. Many business owners expressed interest in sourcing green products on ideological and marketing grounds, but aren't in a financially stable enough position to do so. Several restaurant owners had tried to source produce from local farms, but found it difficult to develop and maintain contacts with local farmers.

Reducing Transportation Emissions

Some Middletown businesses dramatically reduce the environmental impact associated with transportation by telecommuting and teleconferencing, eliminating a portion of their transportation emissions. One or two businesses have also begun using biodiesel to run their supply trucks and haul produce, and one restaurant gives away their vegetable oil to biofuel drivers. Still others have the majority of their employees walk to work instead of driving individually. However, most employees of the businesses we talked to rely on personal transportation to get to work. Public transportation like Middletown's MAT bus system provides a low-impact way to get to work without having to "brave the weather," as one business owner put it, but seem to be underutilized by business owners and staff. Several complained that the MAT ran too infrequently, making employees rely on cars to commute to and from work. Our interviewees also noted a distinct lack of bike racks in downtown Middletown. Without a safe place to lock bikes while at work, employees and business owners must find alternative (and often inconvenient) places to store their bikes, or drive instead. Likewise, customers feel less inclined to bike to stores without safe places to leave their bikes

Water Conservation

Minimizing water use was not very high on the list of priorities of Middletown businesses. However, one explained that they use extra food barrels to collect rainwater to water their plants and flowers, a practice that demonstrates how creativity can reduce both costs and environmental impact.

Energy Efficiency

Energy consumption presents the most potential to cut costs while reducing environmental impact. Indeed, many of the businesses we talked to are already trying to reduce their energy consumption in order to curtail costs. Other business owners source a portion of their energy from CL&P's renewable energy service or from renewable geothermal sources. One business runs its website from a server powered by wind energy.

Responsible Waste Management

While business owners were universally concerned with energy efficiency, their commitment to minimizing their waste stream varied. Almost all businesses expressed some knowledge of and concern for recycling issues. Many businesses save money and reduce waste by transferring to online systems of record keeping and communication. While this system may not apply to all businesses, having as much information as possible in an online format greatly reduces paper and waste disposal costs. Most businesses have recycling systems in place and are working towards recycling greater amounts of their waste. Some businesses are also able to compost their food scraps by partnering with a farm, thereby reducing their waste-hauling overhead and supporting local farmers. We found that business with composting programs rely upon personal connections to farms, meaning that large-scale composting is not yet an option for most Middletown businesses. Right now, there are only two farms in Connecticut^{xvi} that accept food scraps, and only one waste hauler (Global Environmental Services) that is permitted to haul compostables. (For a list of specific recommendations to overcome some of the barriers outlined in this section, see Appendix C.)

General Barriers

Our continued contact with businesses suggested a lack of support for environmentally responsible practices, which took three forms:

First, we detected in our interviews that business owners believe that they are operating in isolation. While some could refer to local resources or to other businesses with green practices, many seemed like they were starting from scratch when they strived to green their business. For this reason, many environmental programs by businesses rely on personal initiative taken by the owners. While these businesses are extremely encouraging, their stories highlight a need for organized support in this area to make the first steps to implementing green practices less intimidating to other businesses.

Second, information about green business practices is not readily available. There is little common recourse for translating the chatter about “going green” into actual business plans. In our interviews, we found that most of the business said that lack of information, intimidation, and confusion were the biggest factors in preventing implementation of new green practices.

Third, businesses feel that many issues are outside of their control and would be much more effectively addressed by Middletown as a whole rather than by individuals. For instance, many businesses we interviewed are tenants, making it impossible for them to implement building-wide environmental practices. Many times businesses could not recycle as much as they would like because many buildings have the incorrect number of trash bins, confusing sorting procedures, or simply no building recycling program. Being a tenant also makes it difficult to modify energy infrastructure: among other limitations, businesses often cannot weatherize their building, install energy-efficient lighting, or freely source their energy from renewable sources.

Based on business’ discussions of their own greening process, it is likely that this lack of support for green business has a significant effect on would-be green businesses. Our interviews

and data collection revealed that environmentally responsible business is more than possible in Middletown, and many businesses reported that going green was far easier than they originally imagined. Taken together, these pieces of evidence suggest that it is the lack of support for getting started, not infeasibility, that keeps most businesses from being environmentally responsible. It seems that increased support for businesses could greatly increase the amount of green business practiced in Middletown.

THE MIDDLETOWN GREEN BUSINESS INITIATIVE

Why a Green Business Initiative?

Through our conversations with business owners and pre-testing our assessment standard, it became clear that an assessment standard would not, in the short term, be the best way for our project to facilitate sustainable business practice in Middletown. Several business owners expressed doubt that businesses would actually follow the standard's list of practices, nor care about the recognition of a seal. "There are so many seals and awards for businesses already," one business owner noted, adding that one more wouldn't be enough to fully engage businesses' participation. "Without someone to talk to businesses individually, most business owners will not take the time and resources to work towards green certification."

Local environmentalists Kim O'Rourke (the recycling coordinator for Middletown) and Kate Miller (a Jonah Center board member and former recycling coordinator of New Haven) – both of whom served as mentors for our project – offered similar reservations. They cited the difficulty of figuring out the "best" practices to include in a standard to guarantee its maximum efficacy, a dilemma that we felt incapable of resolving.

These ideas compelled us to work with the Jonah Center, local environmentalists, and business owners to create the Green Business Initiative, a more comprehensive green business program. We have already created its core components, and hope that it can be expanded to account for a wide variety of business types.

Green Business Initiative: Core Components

The process of creating the assessment standard yielded two major findings: first, environmentally responsible business practice is possible and practical in Middletown, though there are significant structural barriers to its implementation; and second, greening Middletown would

require a comprehensive program, not merely an assessment standard for businesses. These two core components were created in response to those findings:

- 1) *Green Practice Inventory (GPI)*: This document consists of an extensive list of business practices, all feasible in Middletown, that businesses can implement in order to reduce their environmental impact. The diversity of practices on the GPI provides environmentally responsible business options for all types of businesses, regardless of their size, type, or financial resources. (See Appendix B for complete GPI.)
- 2) *Resource Website*: This website of resources can guide Middletown businesses through the steps of several sustainable practices, such as getting a free energy audit, maintaining equipment, and sourcing products responsibly. It also has testimonies from Middletown businesses who have already developed green programs.

Both the Green Practices Inventory and the Resources Website are available at:

<http://www.thejonahcenter.org/greenbusiness/index.php>

Green Business Initiative: Recommendations for the Future

The Green Practice Inventory and Resource Website are both useful steps towards a greener Middletown. The recommendations that follow will help ensure a successful future for the project.

1) A Green Business Initiative Coordinator

Based on our interviews and research, it has become clear that a Green Business Coordinator position needs to be created and funded in order for this project to fully develop. Ideally, the candidate would be familiar with energy auditing and green business practices in all five areas of the Green Practice Inventory (procurement, transportation, water use, energy use, and waste management), and would be comfortable working in a businesses environment. The coordinator

would meet with business owners to discuss the Green Practice Inventory and their current practices, allowing the business owner and coordinator to work together to develop a customized plan of action that the business could undertake to further reduce its environmental impact. Throughout our interviews, business owners repeatedly noted that personal meetings to fill out the green practice inventory would drastically increase the chances of businesses changing their current practices or participating in the Green Business Initiative at all.

Another important function of the coordinator would be to provide resources and advice to interested businesses. The coordinator would oversee the Green Resource Website and the Green Practice Inventory checklist to make sure the information was accurate and up-to-date. As new ways to lessen a business' environmental impact are constantly being developed – through technological innovation or individual creativity – an updated suite of resources will guarantee that the best possible technologies and techniques are available for business owners. Middletown businesses have provided our inventory with some of its most resourceful and innovative practices, so the Coordinator would need to make sure that businesses had continuous input into the program.

Ultimately, the Coordinator would be in charge of keeping the Green Business Initiative functioning by seeking out new business members, annually evaluating the effectiveness of the program, and maintaining regular and open communication with the City, the Chamber of Commerce, businesses, and the public. Funding is imperative not only to hire a well-qualified coordinator, but also to help promote the Green Business Initiative within the community by investing in substantial advertising efforts and public events.

2) Local Alliances

Another key element to making the Green Business Initiative thrive in the future is partnerships with the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce and the City of Middletown. Linking up

with the Chamber of Commerce would guarantee that the initiative was in tune with the needs of the business community. The Chamber could also effectively promote the program within its constituency of businesses. Not only could this dramatically expand the number of businesses participating in the Green Business Initiative, but it could also help draw businesses new to Middletown or business owners thinking about moving to Middletown. Unlike other business owners we interviewed, who feel constrained by their already existing infrastructure, many new business owners have the ability to make structural decisions that could significantly reduce their environmental impact in the long-term — for example, weatherizing a building, investing in energy efficient heating and cooling systems, or buying energy and water efficient appliances to begin with.

Partnering with the City of Middletown is also imperative if the Green Business Initiative is to become a citywide program. The Common Council's interest in economic development, waste management, environmental planning, and tourism, among others, could all benefit from and contribute to a successful Green Business Initiative. Middletown would gain significant positive attention for its efforts towards environmental sustainability,⁵ attracting new businesses, patrons, and support from the state. If the City of Middletown, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Green Business Initiative were able to pool their resources and connect their programs effectively, the entire Middletown community would benefit.

3) Expansion and Customization

With the help of the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Middletown, and other business owners, the Green Business Initiative could reach out to a wide variety of businesses and organization. While the initial stage of the program has focused on businesses in the Main Street area, the program could expand geographically. Moreover, the program could expand to account

⁵ To our knowledge, the Green Business Initiative would be the first of its kind in Connecticut.

for a larger variety of organizations, including hospitals, schools, factories, churches, non-profit organizations, corporations, and property management companies.

Due to the diversity of organizations that Green Business Initiative would eventually include, the Green Practice Inventory and Resource Website should be customized for different types of businesses. As our interviews and pre-tests have shown, there are certain practices that apply more directly to one type of business but may not pertain to another. (For example, food waste is an extremely important issue for a restaurant, but not for a used bookstore.) Therefore, customized inventory lists and resources would be ideal for helping businesses reduce their environmental impact. This might include creating special sections for establishments such as restaurants, retail stores, office buildings, hospitals, schools, factories, and places of worship.

4) Business-to-Business Green Advisory Network

A business-to-business advising network would allow Middletown to capitalize on a sentiment we heard frequently throughout our project: it was easier than business owners thought to implement green practices. Many noted that if they had had a good example or a mentor to follow, they would have done more, and done it sooner. A business-to-business advising network would allow businesses to share information about green practices, and would also allow businesses interested in “going green” to have a guiding mentor. The Green Business Coordinator could have an oversight role in order to make sure the information being provided is up to date. The business-to-business network is in an informal stage of development, but it presents a unique opportunity for businesses to guide each other in environmentally responsible practice.

5) Green Certification

Though our project put the idea of an assessment standard on the back burner, such a “green certification” has significant potential for implementation in Middletown. As discussed in the literature review, many green business programs around the country have a certification or award component. A certification program would be more appropriate and effective once the Green Business Initiative becomes more established. Businesses could be awarded "green seals" based on their performance in each category of the Green Practice Inventory. The establishment of such a certification program would challenge businesses to commit to minimizing their impact and bring positive attention to the businesses already engaging in green practices.

CONCLUSION

The Jonah Center proposed that our group create an assessment standard for environmentally responsible business in Middletown and, in the process, lay the groundwork for a coalition of business, local government, citizen, and non-profit collaboration around environmentalism. To create an assessment standard, we gathered information from local business owners, local environmentalists, and outside resources.

The process of creating the assessment standard yielded two major findings. First, environmentally responsible business practice is possible and practical in Middletown, though there are significant structural barriers to its implementation; and second, that greening Middletown would require a comprehensive program, not merely an assessment standard for businesses.

With these findings in mind, we have developed a two-part program for making Middletown more environmentally sustainable: The Middletown Green Business Initiative. It includes the Green Practice Inventory (GPI) and a Resource Website (as described on page 22).

We believe that the Middletown Green Business Initiative is a crucial step forward for a more environmentally responsible business community in Middletown. However, the tools we have designed necessitate the creation of a Green Business Initiative Coordinator. The Coordinator's main purpose would be to use the GPI and resource website to work with businesses in order to develop an action plan tailored specifically to their needs. The Coordinator would be in charge of keeping the Green Business Initiative functioning by seeking out new business members, annually evaluating the effectiveness of the program, and maintaining regular and open communication with the City, the Chamber of Commerce, businesses, and the public. Funding is imperative not only to hire a well-qualified coordinator, but also to help promote the Green Business Initiative within the community by investing in substantial advertising efforts and public events.

Environmentally responsible business in Middletown is happening now and has immense possibility for growth. We believe our project has laid the groundwork for a comprehensive Middletown initiative that would not only reduce local environmental impact, but also set a powerful example for other communities. Middletown has the potential to be a leader in this area and we hope that our project will be used to achieve this goal.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Our interview script was designed to account for a maximum of information, with special attention to aspects of business practice which we hadn't considered and did not know we hadn't considered.

Text in *italics* prompted the interviewer; text in **bold** was to be addressed to the interviewee.

Wesleyan-Jonah Center Sustainable Business Project Interview Script — February 19, 2009

-Explain project, provide info sheet. Explain recording system.

-Have them sign consent form. Emphasize that no one besides us four researchers will know their answers (even the Jonah Center) and that, since we're trying to find out what keeps businesses from pursuing green practices, it's best for them and the environment that they give complete, honest answers.

1. Quick Basics:

- a. What type of business do you operate? How many employees do you have?**
- b. Is your business independent or part of a franchise?**
- c. Do you own or rent?**
- d. How many years have you been in business?**
- e. How many years have you been in this location?**

2. Best practices

Preamble, then:

In your mind, what are your most green or efficient practices?

or

Since we're trying to get at the most advanced practices, what do you think are your most developed sustainable programs?

Encourage them if they want to name multiple practices. If they have no answer, move to number 3.

In regards to EACH program:

- a. Walk me through what happens in a given week.**
- b. When did you implement this? Can you explain the process of development?**
- c. What were the obstacles to setting it up? Did you have any major setbacks? What are the difficulties with its day-to-day operation?**
- d. Can you think of any problems that other businesses would have doing?**

3. Specifics and Areas of Need

We're trying to get information in six main areas: (a) waste (b) heating and lighting (c) water use (d) transportation (e) resource use and (f) way of life promotion. So far, we've already talked about X, Y, Z areas. Are there ways your business is striving for environmental responsibility or cost cutting measures in any of these areas (a,b,c,d,e,and f)?

If YES, repeat three-question sequence from earlier.

If NO, proceed with these questions for each area:

a. Have you thought about pursuing green practices in this area? Like what? How did this idea come about? Have customers ever commented or asked about your sustainable practices?

b. What have the major obstacles been to implementing this system? *Remind them that being honest is a good thing because a) the info is confidential and b) the better we know the obstacles, the more helpful our assessment standard can be.*

4. Energy Use and Costs

One of the most straightforward ways to lower environmental impact is by changing energy consumption. Do you pay your own utility bills? Have they been stable? How do they compare with other expenses?

5. Waste

Is there any way of measuring your waste output?

6. Cost Cutting

A lot of cost-saving measures actually lessen your environmental impact. Are you implementing any cost-saving programs?

7. Middletown, Knowledge of Resources

a. Do you have a sense for what keeps other businesses in the area from pursuing environmentally responsible practices?

b. Are you aware of any programs, subsidies, tax credits for small businesses interested in green practices? Are you participating in any of them?

c. Would you be interested in receiving more information about how to further “green” your business?

8. Closing:

a. Is there anything else you’d like us to know? Other practices, or other things we should consider when making our assessment-standard? Any concerns?

b. Would you mind if we followed up with you if any other questions come up? What is the best way to get in contact with you (phone, email, in person)?

c. Are there any other businesses you think we should talk to?

Mention possibility of business-to-business advising network.

Thanks and gracious exit.

APPENDIX B: GREEN PRACTICE INVENTORY

1) RESPONSIBLE PROCUREMENT

This section addresses your commitment to purchasing environmentally responsible products, thereby using your purchasing power to reduce environmental impact.

OFFICE SUPPLIES

Y N n/a

- all office paper is 30% recovered material.
- purchase reusable/refillable recharged printer, copier, and fax cartridges.
- purchase plastic bags made from recycled materials.
- purchase toilet paper/paper towels/tissues made from recycled material.
- use rechargeable batteries.
- return, re-use, and repair wooden palettes and crates.
- request reusable or recyclable/recycled packing materials from suppliers.
- invest in durable equipment that minimizes or prevents customer and employee waste.

DINING

Y N n/a

- provide durable cups, dishware, and cutlery in employee kitchens.
- provide clean towels as an alternative to paper towels.
- use compostable plastics and compost them.
- offer beverages dispensed from tanks or refillable bottles instead of individual packages, provided that you make available reusable cups for these beverages. If this is not feasible, provide beverages in aluminum cans or plastic or glass bottles that are readily recyclable.
- source food organically and locally, especially produce.

INFRASTRUCTURE/OPERATIONAL

Y N n/a

- when replacing flooring, install carpet products certified by Green Guard or the Carpet and Rug Institute.
- use "shielded lighting," lighting fixtures that direct all light downward, inside and outside.
- use low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paint products.
- use refillable spray bottles instead of disposable aerosol cans.
- have used green products (carpets, flooring, construction materials) for building renovations.

use green cleaning products or require the use of green cleaning products in janitorial contracts.

other: _____

2) ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION

This section addresses your commitment to responsible use of energy resources including reduction, efficiency, and utilizing renewable energy.

Y N n/a

- conduct an energy audit.
- keep monthly fuel and electricity usage records.
- when replacing light bulbs, purchase CFLs.
- turn off lights/equipment at night or when not in use.
- use motion sensors to turn off unnecessary lights.
- change air filters on ventilation system monthly.
- all employees undergo energy efficiency training.
- have heating and cooling system on timers.
- source energy from renewable production.
- utilize geothermal, wind or solar power on site.
- build or retrofit business to LEED certification.
- use non-internal combustion lawn and yard equipment (manual or electric)
- do you own the building in which your business is located?

If you use **freezers or refrigerators**:

Y N n/a

- perform maintenance annually.
- replace door gaskets annually.
- clean beneath freezers/refrigerators weekly.
- when replacing freezers/refrigerators, install Energy Star appliances.
- other: _____

3) WATER CONSERVATION

This section highlights your commitment to reducing water consumption and to reusing water efficiently and creatively.

Y N n/a

- monitor and post water-usage rates, then identify high consumption areas and develop a reduction plan.
- all employees undergo water conservation training.
- serve drinking water only upon request (in restaurants and bars).
- offer bottled water only upon request or don't offer it at all.

-
- use low flow/faucet aerators, flush valve, or infrared controlled toilets and urinals.
 - efficient pre-wash spray valve(s) installed in commercial kitchen.
 - dishwashers are used efficiently (run only when full, hand scrape, fill racks to capacity, use air dry).
 - recycle processed water.
 - improve cooling tower efficiency/optimize blowdown – regular service of cooling system.
 - use air-cooled as opposed to water-cooled ice machines.

If your business performs regular **landscaping** or **gardening** (such as on deck or porch):

Y N n/a

- no synthetic pesticides and fertilizers are used.
- minimize plants' water needs by planting native, drought-tolerant, and/or water efficient species.
- use drip/trickle lines or low flow sprinkler heads.
- use rain barrels to collect rainwater for irrigation.
- optimize/reduce watering schedules (morning/evening/no rain watering).
- composts/ natural (unpainted) mulches used to improve water-holding capability.
- ongoing, regular maintenance of land (i.e. pruning, irrigation).
- other: _____

4) REDUCING TRANSPORTATION EMISSIONS

This section addresses your commitment to minimize transportation emissions associated with employee commutes and delivered products.

Y N n/a

- 10% or more of employees walk/bike to work more than three (3) times per week.
- provide a bike rack for employees/customers and encourage its use.
- offer teleworking or compressed work week schedules, phone meetings whenever possible.
- 20% or more of employees participate in ridesharing/carpool, public transportation, and/or other alternative transportation to get to and from work.
- organize deliveries to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- offer Preferential Parking – reserved spaces for rideshare/vanpools/hybrids.
- provide incentives to employees that purchase more efficient vehicles.
- purchase a high fuel efficiency vehicle when replacing business vehicles.
- if business involves transporting goods, vehicles are fuel-efficient.
- when contracting out your deliveries, choose company that uses fuel efficient vehicles.
- other: _____

5) RESPONSIBLE WASTE MANAGEMENT

This section demonstrates a commitment to reducing the amount of waste material by recycling, reusing, composting, and reducing waste generation.

RECYCLING

Estimate your recycling rate (what percent of all waste that you generate do you recycle?) Must be at least 40% of total waste stream.

Recycling Rate = _____ (recycled material/total waste)

Y N n/a

- Keep records of monthly/yearly waste and recycling
- Provide clearly marked, accessible recycling containers in appropriate locations (e.g. office paper recycling bins near copy machines and at individual workstations; bottle and can receptacles in cafeteria or break room; containers for corrugated cardboard in shipping/receiving area; dedicated dumpsters for recyclables near garbage area or shipping/receiving area).

Federal law, the state of Connecticut and/or the City of Middletown mandate that you recycle the following items. Which do you regularly recycle?

Y N n/a

- corrugated cardboard
- newspaper
- magazines/discarded mail
- white office paper
- glass and metal food and beverage containers
- paper beverage containers (milk cartons, juice packages)
- plastic containers (#1, #2)
- scrap metal
- alkaline batteries
- Ni-Cd rechargeable batteries
- lead-acid batteries (from vehicles)
- fluorescent light bulbs
- computer and electronic equipment
- waste oil
- oils/lubricants
- mercury containing equipment (incl. thermometers)
- leaves
- grass clippings
- clothing

Which other recyclable items do you regularly recycle?

Y N n/a

- toner cartridges
- shrink wrap
- food scraps (composted, can go to animals, coffee grounds to fertilizer, take to local farm, social programs such as Food not Bombs)
- donate used equipment to charities, schools, goodwill.
- reuse packing material.
- wood debris (composted, mulched or reused)

STAFF AND CUSTOMERS

Y N n/a

- include recycling training for employees of all levels.
- proper literature/signs/markings on containers about what can/cannot be recycled.
- work with janitorial staff to make sure recycling is carried out properly.
- employee/team in charge of implementation and promotion of recycling/waste prevention program.
- offer the customer the option of refilling/reusing products.
- provide incentives for customers to bring reusable bags.
- other: _____

APPENDIX C: BUSINESS-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Our interviews revealed significant barriers to green practices in Middletown. The most important of these are addressed in the main body of the report (pp. 21-22). But businesses also had a number of recommendations to overcome specific barriers which we provide below along with a few of our own. These recommendations are by no means comprehensive; rather, they serve as examples of specific policies which could be implemented under the Green Business Initiative.

The majority of food industry businesses reported that local, organic, and/or fresh produce was prohibitively expensive. Many recommended that the Chamber of Commerce or a coalition of restaurants hire a coordinator to establish working relationships between farmers and restaurant owners. By allowing restaurants to buy as a bloc, the partnership would substantially lower the cost of high-quality local produce while supporting local farming communities.

There is a significant deficiency of large-scale composters in Connecticut. It would be useful to search for more farms that are willing to partner with Middletown businesses. Additionally, businesses might need specific help or resources devoted solely to businesses to help them find a way to compost their food scraps.

While some businesses have been able to switch to renewable energy, most cannot due to the high initial cost of switching to renewable sources. It would be useful to have a Middletown-wide initiative to switch to renewable energy. Resources should be devoted to accomplishing the SmartPower 20% by 2010 campaign that Middletown has pledged to complete.

Most businesses either did not mention or spurned the MAT as a way for employees to get to work. Further research is needed to pinpoint the inefficiencies with MAT because we were unable to generate data on this subject in the limited scope of our project. Biking was also an untenable option for most businesses: most business owners cited a lack of bike racks for both

customers and employees as a major barrier. They recommended installing many more bike racks along Main St., where the majority of commerce is focused.

Business' statuses as tenants made many green programs impossible. Because this seems to be a structural, rather than personal barrier, we recommend that a comprehensive survey of building owners in Middletown be carried out in order to assess possible ways to incorporate them into the Green Business Initiative

APPENDIX D: BUSINESS COLLABORATORS

This project could not have happened without the information and advice offered by these businesses and organizations owners. We list them with much gratitude.

Bianco Giolitto Weston Architects LLC - Jeff Bianco

Brew Bakers - Eloise Tencher

Citizens Bank - Chris Riley

Community Health Center - Mark Masselli

It's Only Natural Restaurant - Renana Magee

Kid City Children's Museum - Jen Alexander

Middlesex Fruiterery - Ted Xenelis

Pedal Power - Gary Nichols

Perk On Main - Katie Hughes

The Book Bower - Linda Bower

Neon Deli - Fran Galle

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