

A Green Brand

For a “green and growing” Capital Region

BY JOHN IMES

There is growing evidence that Wisconsin and the Capital Region have what it takes to be among the “greenest” places to do business. In this installment of Making Green Sense, we highlight the unique factors, program initiatives and opportunities that are moving us towards a more sustainable business climate — one that will attract clean jobs and investment and further our state’s long tradition of environmental stewardship.

Green opportunity knocking

A recent study by Vandewalle & Associates in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism recommends an ecotourism strategy as a unique “point of difference” for Wisconsin, one that will “unite and brand our myriad of tourism opportunities.” The report puts forward a framework that can serve as a foundation for developing an overall “green” branding strategy.

What sets Wisconsin apart is a combination of factors not equaled anywhere else. The unique convergence of the Great Lakes, Great Plains and Northern Forests produces a state with tremendous diversity including:

- Geography influenced by glacial impacts, four seasons and a variety of eco-regions and migratory flyways.
- Rich natural resources including forests, farmland and open spaces.
- Abundant fresh water from the Great Lakes, Mississippi River and many thousands of lakes, inland streams and rivers.



- A culture uniquely shaped by native and ethnic settlements, historic main streets and a strong land ethic.

Wisconsin also benefits from its historic reputation for environmental stewardship including luminaries such as Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Frank Lloyd Wright and Gaylord Nelson — all leading conservationists who resided here.

The most recent additions to this longstanding tradition are business owners and innovators who recognize that improved environmental performance results in lower costs and greater market recognition. For example:

- Travel Green Wisconsin, a voluntary program formed in partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Tourism and the nonpartisan Wisconsin Environmental Initiative (WEI), reviews, certifies, and recognizes tourism businesses and organizations that have made a commitment to reduce their environmental impact. The program has grown to over 100 businesses throughout the state and has received significant media attention with articles in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, CNN, *Chicago Tribune*, *Twin Cities Pioneer Press* and numerous Wisconsin news sources. Travel Green provides a unique selling point for

tourism to support the Wisconsin brand, and give the state and hospitality business a marketing edge, promote smart business practices, educate travelers, and protect the beauty and vitality of Wisconsin's landscape.

- Another example is Wisconsin's innovative "Green Tier" law which provides a credible way for businesses to make positive environmental improvements while reducing costs and achieve real business success. Green Tier participants assess their performance, implement green strategies and, in turn, receive flexibility, recognition and other incentives. Green Tier is the alternative to "business as usual" which relies on compliance, costly litigation and minimum environmental standards of "command-and-control." (Full disclosure: I am executive director and co-founder of WEI which manages the Travel Green Wisconsin and Green Built Home programs, and serves as advisor for Green Tier.)
- Other notable organizations promoting greener practices include Buy Local — Buy Wisconsin, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Gathering Waters, The Nature Conservancy, River Alliance, Sustain Dane and efforts to pursue the cutting-edge technologies of the future bioeconomy.

Now is the right time for leadership

Consumer demand continues to grow for environmentally conscious products and services. Everything from hybrids and alternatively fueled vehicles to organic produce and recycling rates are on the rise, and it's now estimated that more than 50 million American consumers make purchasing decisions based on environmental and social criteria.

Manufacturers increasingly are building greener products and are spending more of their marketing budgets to educate consumers. In addition, other states and regions are beginning to pursue green strategies, which will eventually impact our sustainable competitive advantage.

It's rare when opportunity meets the right thing to do. Ownership of that opportunity and seizing upon a new brand will set us apart from other states and regions. We can build on our legacy of environmental leadership and turn business owners, tourists and consumers into profitable stewards of Wisconsin's air, water, and land resources. ■

Do Well by Doing Good

Helping business profit economically by doing what's right for the environment has been WEI's approach since its founding in 1995. Program initiatives in green building, business environmental performance and sustainable tourism present forward thinking, innovative ways to create competitive market advantage and help keep the Capitol Region and Wisconsin — "Green & Growing."



WISCONSIN ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE



16 N. Carroll St., Suite 840
Madison, WI 53703
www.wi-ei.org • 608-280-0360

Barnes INC

"If you're looking for the best, you're looking for Barnes."



- Install lights, displays, wreaths, garland, etc.
- Design lighting displays for your home and yard.
- Design lighting displays for office and commercial buildings.
- Design lighting displays for public areas, such as median strips and parks.
- Decorate trees of all sizes.
- Take down lights and displays, and store at our facility.

6433 Nesbitt Road • Madison
(608) 845-3230 • www.barnesinc.net

Winter HOME Comfort!



Barb Zander
Loan Officer
bzander@home-savings.com

We'll give you \$300 when you close your home loan with us!*

Get some new furniture, choose new paint colors, add a cozy rug – we'll help make your new home extra comfy this winter!

Call Barb today at 282-6141 to get started!

*Offer good for a purchase or refinance. Gift given at time of closing. One gift per household. Loan subject to underwriting approval. Offer expires 12/31/07.



HOME SavingsBank



home-savings.com

608.282.6000