

Case Study: Elmhirst's Resort

Paving a new sustainability path for the accommodation sector

Location: Rice Lake, Ontario

Website: elmhirst.ca



Located just 90 minutes east of Toronto, Elmhirst's Resort is a year-round retreat with cottages, two restaurants, and a full service spa, fitness centre and pools. Elmhirst's boasts conference and wedding facilities, boat rentals, plus docking, runway and air service.

The 240-acre resort is a mixture of waterfront, working farmland, gardens, woodlands and natural landscapes. The resort's strategy is focused around stewardship, sustainable food practices, energy reduction, and community outreach.

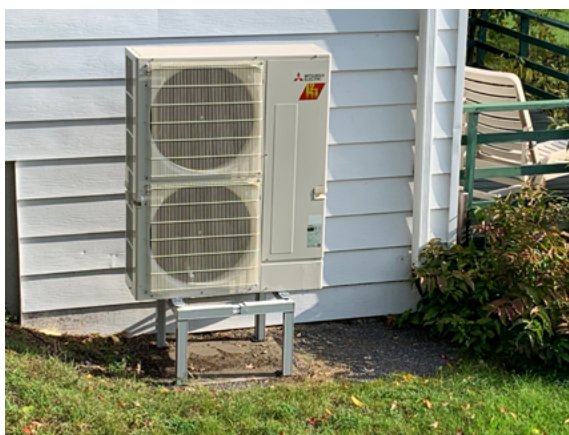
See how Elmhirst's Resort has evolved its sustainability approach in partnership with GreenStep.

Challenge:

Developing a cohesive sustainability plan and tracking results

As a fifth generation family business, sustainability has always been part of the resort's business practices. However, these efforts were developed on an ad hoc basis with little measurement.

Their areas of focus prior to conducting a full sustainability assessment were: reducing emissions by harvesting food on site, using biomass to heat central facilities (equivalent to about 20 homes), and preventing shoreline erosion by preserving old growth forests and indigenous plants. With so much great work underway, the team at Elmhirst's needed to conduct a full assessment of operations to fully understand the future sustainability roadmap.



The Solution:

Establishing a scorecard and identifying the opportunities

As a signatory on GreenStep's **Sustainable Tourism 2030 Pledge**, Elmhirst's Resort conducted a free sustainability assessment. Establishing a baseline helped the resort identify gaps and opportunities to improve performance. Their current sustainability approach has expanded to include staff engagement, measurement, reporting, and goal setting.



Measuring Performance:

Commissioned GreenStep to develop a carbon footprint calculator that measures biomass renewable fuel.



Energy and Waste Reduction:

Implemented a large volume composting program to make better use of commercial kitchen compost and other organic materials from the farm, gardens and trees. Elmhirst's has also replaced all propane HVAC in cottage accommodation with networked heat pumps for better peak efficiency and guest comfort.



Guest Engagement:

Produced a sustainability video that can be easily accessed in each guest accommodation unit via QR code. Guests will also be offered a "Sustainability Kit" prior to check in to reduce use of disposable containers and other environmentally harmful products.



Internal Engagement:

Established a Sustainability Code of Conduct for all team members and formed an internal Sustainability Committee that meets monthly to review progress.



Strategic Planning:

The team has conducted a strategic plan refresh in 2022 and identified sustainability as a core value of our enterprise with strategic priorities to support.



Improved Purchasing Process:

Engaged a new BCorp certified purchasing platform that reports on cost savings and carbon reduction from purchases on their platform.

Results:



Revenue increase



Increase in staff retention



Increase in renewable energy consumption (from 55% to 75%)



The Sustainable Tourism Certification validated much of the work we have done so far, but also highlighted some important next steps. Applying a clearer focus to measuring key energy, environment and social impacts, setting goals to sustain consistent improvement, and getting everyone involved on both sides of our guest relationships will amplify the work we have done already. — Greg Elmhirst, General Manager.

Read more about Elmhirst's Resort.

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