

# SUSTAINABLE DINING:

## A PLAN FOR THE HOFFMAN HOUSE RESTAURANT

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### *Introduction*

Few things impact the environment more than the food we eat. Accordingly, restaurants have a great potential to alter their impacts, from the food they serve to the buildings they inhabit. The Hoffman House has demonstrated a real interest in the environmental consequences of its choices. Dishes make use of locally produced foods, and further efforts could make the Hoffman House's offerings truly sustainable.

In an old building, achieving energy efficiency can be difficult, but as a new business, the Hoffman House doesn't have piles of money to invest in changes. Fortunately, a relatively small amount of money, some effort, and creativity, can take the Hoffman House to the next level of sustainability:

### *1. The Menu*

- **Ingredients.** The Hoffman House makes commendable use of local foods. Building even more relationships with local producers and offering more local foods can make the Hoffman House a model of sustainable cuisine. Offering more vegetarian options or organic foods can also make a difference.
- **Equipment.** Glass and ceramic pans hold heat better than metal ones, allowing the oven's temperature to be reduced by 25°. Keeping the oven and burners clean keeps them working efficiently.
- **Preparation.** The cooking staff is busy and has little time to think about energy conservation, but by developing a few good habits, they can save energy without disrupting their routines. These include covering pots with lids and turning the oven off five minutes early – it'll keep cooking.

### *2. The Building*

- **Windows.** The Hoffman House's large windows are an asset, allowing ample natural light and solar heat in winter. But they can also be a source of heat loss or overheating during summer. When the restaurant isn't open (until 11:30 am), heavy curtains can block unwanted summer sun. They also can provide insulation to the windows during cold nights. At other times the curtains can be drawn open.
- **Air conditioning.** Because one section of the restaurant is air conditioned during summer and the other section isn't, it's important to keep the door between the two sections closed tightly. Improve the efficiency of air conditioners by replacing filters once they're no longer transparent. A certified service person can clean their coils and check the refrigerant.
- **Hot water heater.** Insulating the hot water heater and its pipes can make it 15% more efficient. In addition, it will reduce overheating in the kitchen, creating a more comfortable environment for the kitchen staff and reducing

cooling loads. If the dishwasher has a booster heater, the temperature of the hot water heater doesn't need to be above 120°. Draining a quart of water from the tank every three months prevents sediment accumulation and improves efficiency.

- **Refrigerators.** After air conditioning, refrigerators are the largest electricity consumers in the restaurant. Cleaning their coils twice a year with a vacuum or brush can improve their efficiency by 30%.
- **Lights.** Compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) can save a lot of energy and money while maintaining the same quantity and quality of light, but it's important to choose the correct bulbs. CFLs should be one-quarter the wattage of the bulbs they're replacing. The typical spiral CFLs can replace standard incandescents, but special bulbs need to be replaced by the corresponding CFLs (replace reflector incandescents with reflector CFLs, etc).

### ***3. Education***

- **Advertise your efforts.** Customers like to know that they're eating local or organic foods. The menu should let them know when they are. Postings around the bulletin board are a great way to introduce patrons to the local farmers who produce their food. It's also a way to let customers know about the efforts undertaken by the Hoffman House to make its building and operations more energy efficient.

### ***4. The Future***

- **Upgrading appliances.** When appliances need to be replaced, the Hoffman House will save energy and money by choosing the most energy efficient models.
- **Investment.** As a historic building, the Hoffman House faces challenges in reducing its energy use. Someday, the Hoffman House may have money to invest in a more complete efficiency upgrade. A professional energy audit would identify further ways the Hoffman House can save energy. Alternatively, purchasing energy from clean and renewable sources wouldn't save money but would reduce the Hoffman House's environmental impact.
- **Keep learning.** Search the Internet. Read a book or magazine. Keep learning about our relationships with the natural environment and how we can reduce our negative impacts.

This is a project of the **Zero Emissions Road Trip**.  
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