

# SUSTAINABLE GROCER PROGRAM



## CASE STUDY

## Grocer Assessment Identifies Environmental and Economic Savings

Cincinnatus Home Center (Cincinnatus) has been in business for over 21 years serving customers in Cincinnatus, NY and the surrounding area, near Cortland. Cincinnatus provides a wide variety of products to consumers, including lumber, home improvement supplies, power equipment, groceries, and gardening materials.

### CHALLENGE

Cincinnatus values its community and is committed to providing quality products and excellent customer service. Being a responsible community member is important to them. Cincinnatus was looking for ways to improve their environmental footprint, and needed some expert advice.

### SOLUTION

NYSP21's Sustainable Grocer initiative offered exactly what Cincinnatus was looking for - cost effective solutions to conserve water, reduce and better manage organic and food wastes, and reduce their use of toxic and hazardous materials.

The goal was to identify opportunities to improve environmental performance, with solutions that are either cost neutral or cost saving.

Cincinnatus Home Center completed a Pre-Assessment Checklist, a self-evaluation that identifies current practices and materials used in order to establish a baseline from which a roadmap to sustainable practice can be developed.

NYSP21 reviewed the Checklist and performed an on-site assessment at Cincinnatus Home Center to identify opportunities to increase water conservation, further decrease the environmental impact of cleaning products, and better manage food waste to reduce the amount of waste generated and the amount sent to landfill.

### RESULTS

NYSP21 identified opportunities to improve environmental performance that were either a cost savings or cost neutral solution. One cost saving recommendation was to replace their conventional cleaning products with environmentally preferable alternatives. Switching from bleach and other caustic cleaners to more environmentally friendly options would have no increase in cost and replacing both floor cleaning and floor stripping products could lead to combined potential cost savings of nearly \$2,000 annually.

To reduce the use of public fresh water resources for non-potable/non-drinking uses, NYSP21 determined that a rooftop collection system on the 7,000 square foot main building could produce over 2,000 gallons from one inch of rainfall - enough to supply the store for a full week! To extend the life of produce and reduce the amount of food waste sent to the landfill, it was recommended to use ethylene absorbing products. As fresh fruits and vegetables ripen, they release ethylene gas which accelerates ripening and leads to quick spoilage. Ethylene absorbing products inserted into produce packaging will absorb the gas and thus

### CHALLENGE

- Cincinnatus needed expert advice on how to reduce their environmental footprint in areas like water conservation, food waste, and chemical reduction

### SOLUTION

- NYSP21 conducted an on-site environmental assessment at Cincinnatus as part of their Sustainable Grocer Pilot

### RESULTS

- Cincinnatus switched to more environmentally preferable cleaners at no additional cost and reduced overall volume of cleaner use by 55%
- Use ethylene absorbing paper to successfully prolong produce life
- Reduced entrance salt usage by installing a concrete pad with integrated heating system
- Purchased floor mats made from recycled materials that do not require chemical cleaners and work better than their previous mats, resulting in the floors being cleaned less frequently
- Began switching all light bulbs to LED to reduce energy costs
- Started tracking food waste in order to reduce unnecessary losses
- Developed a written Sustainability Plan to formalize their environmental initiatives



extend the shelf life of produce without compromising product quality.

Another recommendation from the assessment was alternative methods for disposing meat waste. The meat department prepares and butchers meat, generating approximately 100 lbs of waste per month. The waste could be sent to a rendering company, which would convert the waste into oil. Another option is sending the waste to an anaerobic digester to convert the waste into methane.

Since the assessment, Cincinnatus Home Center has:

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As a next step, Cincinnatus Home Center is evaluating the use of solar panels and rainwater harvesting to reduce their energy and water demands. According to Kristin Russell, Manager of the Cincinnatus Home Center, involvement in the NYSP2I Sustainable Grocer initiative has “helped us to better understand our environmental footprint and identify opportunities to reduce it even further”.



## TESTIMONIAL

“Participating in the Sustainable Grocer Pilot helped us to better understand our environmental footprint and identify opportunities to reduce it even further. We have implemented many of the recommendations made by NYSP2I, including tracking our food waste in order to reduce it and reducing the amount of cleaning products we use as well as choosing more environmentally preferable cleaners. The cost benefit analyses and additional environmental information provided by NYSP2I for these measures as well as others we plan to implement in the future is invaluable. Participating in the Pilot ramped up our sustainability program and we are thankful for P2I’s expertise.”

– Kristin Russell,  
Cincinnatus Home Center

## NYSP2I PARTNERS

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