

DOWN TO EARTH

A SIMPLE SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

YOUR GUIDE TO RUNNING A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS IN NEW JERSEY
BY RUFIYA BLANK



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Environmental Stewards
New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

Photos by Daniel Mathieu
Illustrations by Lianna Nelson

TABLE OF CONTENT



1. **Introduction:** *A Personal Journey Toward Sustainability*
2. **Why Sustainability Matters:** *The Case for Small Businesses*
3. **Starting Small:** *Step by Step Roadmap for Eco friendly Business*
4. **Brnich Karate:** *A Roadmap to a Greener Dojang (Martial Arts Studio)*
5. **Sustainable Floral Business:** *Growing Beauty Responsibly*
6. **Agger Grand:** *Cultivating Soil Health and Sustainability from the Ground Up*
7. **Facing the Climate Challenge:** *Risks and Resilience for Local Businesses*
8. **Consumers Still Value Sustainability:** *Even in Tough Economic Times*
9. **Closing Reflections:** *Dream Big, Start Where You Are*
10. **Helpful Resources:** *Tools and Support for NJ Business Owners*
11. **Gratitude:** *Thank You to Rutgers Environmental Stewardship Program*
12. **Contact:** *How to Reach Me*



1. INTRODUCTION A PERSONAL JOURNEY TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

For the past five years, the idea of sustainability in business has become something of an obsession for me. I didn't always know where to start. Despite my deep passion for environmental science, I lacked formal knowledge in the subject. My goodwill alone wasn't enough and I started to educate myself.

Fortunately, today we have access to a wealth of information right at our fingertips. It's a stark contrast to the past, when I spent entire days in libraries doing research. That curiosity and drive eventually led me to enroll in the Environmental Stewardship Program at Rutgers University, and ultimately, to write this e-book.

This guide is not meant to be a lecture. It's an offering. In it, I'll share my research, the why and the how of sustainability for small businesses, along with real-life scenarios that show what sustainable business models can look like.

But the most important question isn't how, it's why.

Why will you decide to do it, or not?

For me, the answer is simple: it's a matter of conscience.

In the grand scope of time, my journey on this planet, whether it's 80, 90, or 100 years, is just a microscopic dot. But even within that tiny moment, I refuse to be insignificant. I want to add something meaningful to this world, no matter how small.

This guide is here for you, for me, and for all of us.

What you choose to do with it is entirely a personal decision.

If you feel even the tiniest spark inside you, a desire to make a difference, I hope these pages help you find direction, inspiration, and purpose.

For your business. For your children. For the future of our planet.



DREAM. DO WHAT YOU CAN. LET'S BEGIN.

2.WHY SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS-THE CASE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Sustainability is no longer a trend. It is a necessity, a human necessity.

After living in different countries and under different regimes, one thing I know for certain is that personal values and resilience matter. Administrations change, policies shift, but resilience shapes your voice, and your voice has power. If we truly care about our planet, we must speak up and act, no matter the noise around us.

Small businesses are the heartbeat of our communities and economy. In New Jersey alone, they make up 99.6% of all businesses. While sustainability efforts are often associated with large corporations, small businesses have just as much potential to make a difference, and in many cases, even more.

Why It Matters.

Sustainability isn't just about saving the planet. It's also about strengthening your business. When approached with intention, sustainable practices can reduce costs, improve efficiency, attract loyal customers, and enhance your brand's legacy. It shows that you cared, that you took responsibility, and that you looked ahead.

More and more people today are asking:

Where does this product come from?

How is it made?

Is this business doing right by people and the planet?

If your business has honest, thoughtful answers, you have a competitive edge, and something even more valuable: integrity.



2.WHY SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS-THE CASE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES



Economic and Environmental Realities

New Jersey faces its share of environmental challenges, rising sea levels, extreme weather, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Small businesses can play a vital role in addressing these issues. Whether it's reducing water use, switching to renewable energy, or sourcing materials locally, every action makes a difference.

Fortunately, the state is providing more tools to help: grants, tax incentives, and support programs to encourage sustainability. Taking advantage of these opportunities now prepares your business for the future and sets you apart in the present.

Social Responsibility and Local Leadership

When you choose to act sustainably, you do more than help the environment. You inspire your team, engage your customers, and set a standard in your community. You're also making a conscious choice to think beyond the present moment and consider future generations.



2.WHY SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS-THE CASE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES



Economic and Environmental Realities

Small businesses often have a more personal connection with their communities. That closeness is a powerful advantage. Large corporations can shift global supply chains, but small businesses shape neighborhoods.

And never forget: your voice matters. Your choices matter.

Barriers Are Real, But So Are the Benefits

Yes, challenges exist: time, cost, and uncertainty; but sustainability doesn't require perfection. It requires action.

Even the smallest step can spark change.

This guide is here to support that first step. In the chapters ahead, you'll find practical examples, tools, and ideas tailored for small businesses like yours.

Because in the end, sustainability isn't just about what we might lose, it's about what we have the power to protect.

Sustainability is our future.



3: STARTING SMALL: STEP BY STEP ROADMAP FOR ECO-FRIENDLY BUSINESS



What Small Businesses Can Do?

Small businesses have a powerful role to play in building climate resilience and protecting local environments. Even modest changes can make a lasting impact. In New Jersey, many businesses are already taking action, whether it's installing energy-efficient equipment, reducing waste through composting, switching to reusable materials, or sourcing products locally.



3: STARTING SMALL: STEP BY STEP ROADMAP FOR ECO-FRIENDLY BUSINESS

What Small Businesses Can Do? (continued)

For example, Arlee's Raw Blends in Princeton reduces food waste through composting and donations, while Panini Bay Restaurant in Tuckerton elevated its building to protect against future floods. These steps not only help the environment but also improve operational efficiency and customer trust.

For more detailed case studies and guidance, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection offers excellent resources tailored for businesses seeking to implement sustainability initiatives:

<https://dep.nj.gov/sustainability/steps-to-sustainability/sustainability-guides-and-case-studies/>



3: STARTING SMALL: STEP BY STEP ROADMAP FOR ECO-FRIENDLY BUSINESS

Sustainable strategies examples.

To prepare for future disruptions and embrace sustainability, consider the following strategies:

1



Evaluate Your Risk Profile
Use NJDEP's Climate Resilience Toolkit and FEMA flood and wildfire maps to assess local threats.

2



Create a Continuity Plan
Include wildfire smoke days, heatwaves, and drought related service cuts. Consider remote work, emergency suppliers, and digital backup systems.

3



Adopt Climate Friendly Infrastructure
Install rain gardens, water efficient fixtures, and renewable energy systems. Seek grants from Sustainable Jersey and NJ Clean Energy Program.

3



Collaborate Locally
Join regional resilience coalitions or small business task forces. Share resources and strategies to reduce vulnerability collectively.

4



Track and Reduce Emissions
Carbon tracking tools (many offered free by EPA and state programs) help businesses measure and reduce their environmental impact often with cost savings.



3: STARTING SMALL: STEP BY STEP ROADMAP FOR ECO-FRIENDLY BUSINESS

Sustainable strategies examples.

To prepare for future disruptions and embrace sustainability, consider the following strategies:

➤ ***STEP 1 Evaluate Your Risk Profile:***

Use NJDEP's Climate Resilience Toolkit and FEMA flood and wildfire maps to assess local threats.

➤ ***STEP 2 Create a Continuity Plan:***

Include wildfire smoke days, heatwaves, and drought related service cuts. Consider remote work, emergency suppliers, and digital backup systems.



3: STARTING SMALL: STEP BY STEP ROADMAP FOR ECO-FRIENDLY BUSINESS



Sustainable strategies examples (continued).

➤ **STEP 3 Adopt Climate Friendly Infrastructure:**

Install rain gardens, water efficient fixtures, and renewable energy systems. Seek grants from Sustainable Jersey and NJ Clean Energy Program.

➤ **STEP 4 Collaborate Locally:**

Join regional resilience coalitions or small business task forces. Share resources and strategies to reduce vulnerability collectively.

➤ **STEP 5 Track and Reduce Emissions:**

Carbon tracking tools (many offered free by EPA and state programs) help businesses measure and reduce their environmental impact, often with cost savings.



CHAPTER 4: BRNICH KARATE: A ROADMAP TO A GREENER DOJANG (MARTIAL ARTS STUDIO)



I found Brnich Karate by chance. It was my daughter who inspired me to begin martial arts later in life than most would expect. But what are “standards,” really? I’ve never been one to follow the rules strictly, and here I am in Deptford, NJ, in a shopping plaza, learning Soo Bahk Do from the ground up. I am grateful to Matthew and Courtney Wyatt to allow me to use their studio as a case study.

I realized that creating a sustainability guide for martial arts studios wasn’t just useful for this book, it could also benefit studios across New Jersey, across the US, and around the world.

What if the sustainability conversation started not with governments or corporations, but with our Little Ninjas? What if we planted small seeds of awareness now, in the dojang, and watched them grow into mighty trees of action in the future?

So, here is the guide. A simple, clear roadmap of what a martial arts studio can do to be more sustainable. And I hope I’ll have the strength to follow through with it myself, though if you know me, you know persistence is one of my best traits :)



CHAPTER 4: BRNICH KARATE: CASE STUDY

A ROADMAP TO A GREENER DOJANG (MARTIAL ARTS STUDIO) CONTINUED

Phase 1: *Planning and Awareness*

Goals:

- *Assess current practices*
- *Engage the Brnich Karate community*
- *Identify early wins for sustainability*

Action Steps:

- *Conduct an energy and waste audit of the studio*
- *Survey students and families about green habits and ideas (see page13)*
- *Host a “Kick-Off to Green” open house to introduce the initiative*
- *Begin a “Green Tip of the Week” board at the studio*



CHAPTER 4: CONTINUED

THE RESPONSES FROM THE SURVEY TITLED "INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS – SUSTAINABILITY & FAMILY DECISIONS"



Here's a summary of the key findings from the first few responses:

Key Takeaways:

Does sustainability matter in choosing businesses/programs for kids?

✓ All respondents so far answered **Yes**.

Would eco-friendly practices at a karate studio influence enrollment decisions?

✓ Majority answered **Yes**

🤔 A few answered **Maybe**

Do parents consider sustainability when choosing children's activities?

✓ Mixed results: some said **Yes**, others **Maybe**, none said **No**

Would they be more likely to support/recommend a business that promotes environmental responsibility?

✓ **100%** said **Yes**

CHAPTER 4: BRNICH KARATE: A ROADMAP TO A GREENER DOJANG (MARTIAL ARTS STUDIO) CONTINUED



Phase 2: *Implementation of Eco-Friendly Practices*

Goals:

- *Start reducing environmental impact through small, consistent changes*
- *Create visible momentum in the studio community*

Action Steps:

- *Switch to LED lighting and install programmable thermostats*
- *Replace chemical cleaners with eco-friendly, non-toxic alternatives*
- *Launch a reusable water bottle policy and phase out single-use plastics*
- *Start a uniform (gi) upcycling and donation station*
- *Implement digital waivers and announcements to reduce paper use*



CHAPTER 4: BRNICH KARATE: A ROADMAP TO A GREENER DOJANG (MARTIAL ARTS STUDIO) CONTINUED

Phase 3: *Community and Student Engagement*

Goals:

- *Connect the studio's mission with broader environmental action*
- *Empower students—especially youth—to lead by example*

Action Steps:

- *Organize “Eco Belt Days” with eco-challenges and recognition certificates*
- *Host seasonal community clean-ups or tree planting with local partners*
- *Offer a workshop for parents and students on sustainability at home*
- *Develop a student “Green Team” to share ideas and track progress*



CHAPTER 4: BRNICH KARATE: A ROADMAP TO A GREENER DOJANG (MARTIAL ARTS STUDIO) CONTINUED



Phase 4: *Tracking Progress and Long-Term Commitment*

Goals:

- *Evaluate results, celebrate successes, and plan for continued growth*
- *Apply for recognition through a program like Sustainable Jersey for Businesses*

Projected Impact by End of 2026: *25–30% energy savings. Elimination of most single use plastics. Full participation in a gi recycling program*

- *Increased environmental awareness among students and families*

Final Reflection:

"We always teach our students to leave the mat better than they found it.

Now we're learning to do the same for the world around us."

This is just one dojang, in one town, doing its part. If we all take small, intentional steps together, the impact can be far greater than we ever imagined.

<https://brnichkarate.com/>



CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE FLORAL BUSINESS – GROWING BEAUTY RESPONSIBLY

My romance with flowers began a long time ago, in my mother's apartment. As a child, I would collect wildflowers from outside and arrange them into small bouquets. Sometimes I used cuttings from our window garden, whatever I could find. I was guided by curiosity and beauty.

As I grew older, floral design remained a passion. While working full-time in Boston, I took a six-month professional floral design course. It was winter, and the classes were held downtown where parking was a challenge. I'd carry my floral creations on foot for 15 minutes, wrapped in garbage bags to protect them from the wind and snow. Some didn't make it. But I kept going.

I even worked for a few years as a florist. While floral work was deeply fulfilling, it could not match the income of my corporate career, so I returned to business. Flowers are still an important part of my life, along with my ongoing concern about sustainability in the floral industry.



CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE FLORAL BUSINESS – GROWING BEAUTY RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)



The Problem with Traditional Floral Design

Sustainability has always been a challenge in floristry. Conventional floral practices often rely on:

- *Floral foam: A popular design tool that is non-biodegradable and full of toxic chemicals.*
- *Single use plastics: Wrappings, ribbons, and containers that are discarded quickly.*
- *Air shipped flowers: Many flowers are imported, traveling thousands of miles and requiring refrigeration, contributing to high carbon emissions.*
- *Waste: Beautiful arrangements used for one event are often thrown away the next day.*



CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE FLORAL BUSINESS – GROWING BEAUTY RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)



Positive Changes Are Blooming

The good news is that change is happening.

In recent years, more and more designers are shifting toward sustainable floral practices, such as:

- *Using biodegradable floral foam alternatives or going foam-free entirely*
- *Choosing locally grown, seasonal flowers from community farms or gardens*
- *Donating flowers to hospitals, nursing homes, or shelters after events*
- *Creating zero-waste arrangements using reusable containers and minimal packaging*
- *Composting green waste instead of sending it to landfills*

There is still a long way to go, but if we're trying, we're already progressing. Every bouquet made with intention, every flower reused or composted, is a step in the right direction.

Is the floral business fully sustainable today? No. It has a long way to go. But there's progress. There's change. And most importantly, there's effort.



CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE FLORAL BUSINESS – GROWING BEAUTY RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)



The Call for Conscious Floristry

Floristry is not just art, it is communication. Flowers mark our most important moments: weddings, births, celebrations, farewells. The floral designers put their talent and heart in their creations.

What if those moments could also speak of care for the planet?

Whether you're a small floral studio in New Jersey or a hobbyist designing for friends, the principles of sustainable floristry are accessible and impactful. In the next section, we'll outline practical steps any floral business can take to grow beauty responsibly.



CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE FLORAL BUSINESS – GROWING BEAUTY RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)



A Sustainability Roadmap for Floral Businesses

Phase 1: Begins with Awareness

Goals:

- *Understand your environmental impact*
- *Identify low-cost, immediate changes*

Action Steps:

- *Track how much waste is produced after events*
- *Audit packaging materials and switch to recyclable or compostable options*
- *Research local flower farms and seasonal availability*
- *Educate your team about sustainable practices*



CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE FLORAL BUSINESS – GROWING BEAUTY RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)



Phase 2: Implement Greener Practices

Goals:

- *Reduce waste, imports, and reliance on single use materials, use natural compostable material and reusable structures*

Action Steps:

- *Switch to foam free or biodegradable mechanics*
- *Use reusable vessels and encourage clients to return them*
- *Purchase flowers from local farms whenever possible*
- *Compost green waste and clippings*
- *Partner with local nonprofits and hospitals to donate flowers after events*



CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE FLORAL BUSINESS – GROWING BEAUTY RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)



Phase 3: Communicate and Connect

Goals:

- *Share your sustainability journey with clients and your community*

Example: a flowers class in your shop with sustainable materials

Action Steps:

- *Add a sustainability statement to your website and proposals*
- *Share behind-the-scenes content on social media about your green efforts*
- *Offer clients the option of a “green package” or waste-free design*
- *Collaborate with eco-conscious wedding planners and venues*



CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE FLORAL BUSINESS – GROWING BEAUTY RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)



Phase 4: Reflect and Grow

Goals:

- *Measure impact and set long-term goals*

Action Steps:

- *Track flower miles and reduce air-freighted imports year over year, this one is very challenging because most of the flowers coming from Peru or Columbia*
- *Survey clients about sustainable options and preferences*
- *Set annual goals (e.g., 80% local flowers, zero foam by next season)*



CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINABLE FLORAL BUSINESS – GROWING BEAUTY RESPONSIBLY (CONTINUED)



Final Thought:

Sustainability in floristry begins with desire and curiosity. That's how it started for me. In my journey to create sustainable floral installations, I began upcycling materials and drying flowers. What emerged was something unexpected and entirely new way of creating, almost like painting with nature.

*Floral designers are inherently talented seekers of beauty and perfection. But when we shift our intention, when we choose to create with purpose, we unlock a new kind of artistry. One that celebrates not just the occasion, but also honors **Mother Earth**.*

Let each petal be a message:

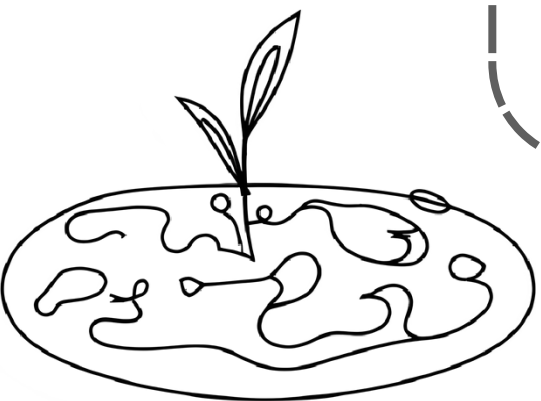
We care. We notice. We're willing to grow differently.



CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY

AGGER GRAND – CULTIVATING SOIL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE GROUND UP

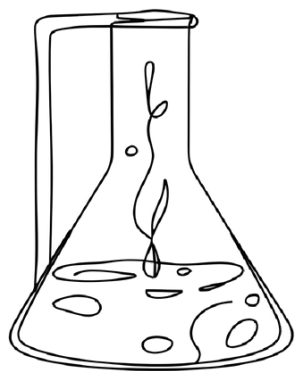
*In the heart of New Jersey's sustainability movement, **Agger Grand** has emerged as a thoughtful, innovative platform that connects people to the living systems beneath their feet. Founded with a deep appreciation for soil health, regenerative practices, and ecosystem resilience, Agger Grand represents the kind of small business that is redefining how we approach environmental stewardship at a community level.*



CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY

AGGER GRAND – CULTIVATING SOIL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE GROUND UP

Agger Grand operates as both a media and technology platform, showcasing stories, data, and visuals that center on land based wisdom and ecological connection. From highlighting native plants and organic farms to demonstrating DIY soil testing and biochar use, the platform acts as an accessible knowledge base for anyone interested in working with, and not against the natural systems. Its suite of digital tools: from a soil texture calculator to compost databases and web-based testing tools, the platform is quietly digitizing the ecosystem of soil management, making regenerative practices more accessible and scalable through technology.



CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY

AGGER GRAND – CULTIVATING SOIL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE GROUND UP

*At the heart of **Agger Grand** is **Rob Mueller**, the platform's founder and creative force. Rob and I were both members of the Rutgers Environmental Stewards Program, where we connected over a shared passion for education, technology, and environmental responsibility. Rob brings not only technical knowledge of soil and sustainability, but also a gift for translating those complex topics into compelling, visual narratives that engage and inform a wide audience.*



CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY

AGGER GRAND – CULTIVATING SOIL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE GROUND UP

*What makes **Agger Grand** stand out is its focus on practical storytelling. Through short form videos, interviews with land stewards, and collaborative community projects, it brings attention to how individual actions and land management practice no matter what the scale, can contribute to a healthier planet. Rob's work through Agger Grand aligns beautifully with the Rutgers Environmental Stewards' mission to equip residents with the tools and knowledge to effect positive change in their communities.*



CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY

AGGER GRAND – CULTIVATING SOIL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE GROUND UP

*In the context of small business sustainability, **Agger Grand** offers a powerful reminder that ecological literacy and entrepreneurship can go together. Whether it's a small farm using regenerative methods or a local nursery promoting native species, the stories Agger Grand amplifies help make sustainable practices visible, credible, and inspiring.*




CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY

AGGER GRAND – CULTIVATING SOIL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE GROUND UP

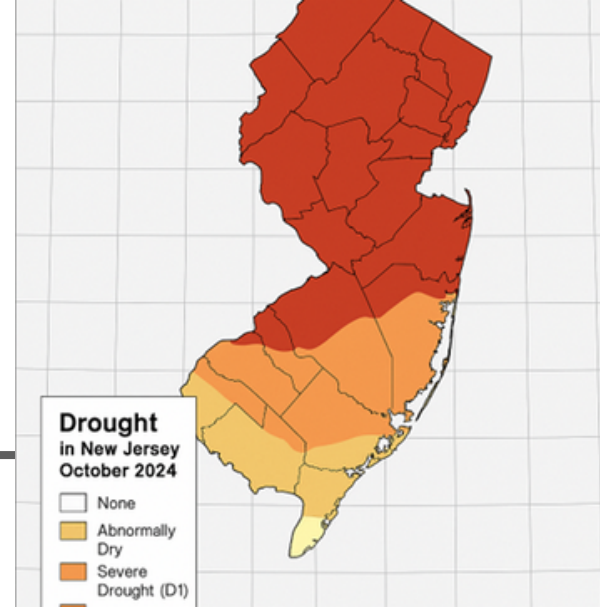
*Businesses like **Agger Grand** demonstrate that New Jersey's path to sustainability is not driven by policy alone, but by passionate individuals and organizations working creatively at the intersection of education, media, technology, and land care. Their presence also reflects a growing consumer demand for transparency, authenticity, and environmental integrity in the business world.*

Learn more:  aggergrand.com

 Instagram: [@aggergrand](https://www.instagram.com/aggergrand)



CHAPTER 7: CLIMATE CHANGE AND SMALL BUSINESS: RISKS AND RESILIENCE



Climate Risks on the Rise

In 2024, climate-related events in New Jersey reached new levels of urgency:

Drought:

October 2024 was the driest on record in New Jersey since 1895. Reservoir levels dropped sharply—Wanaque Reservoir dipped to 45% capacity—triggering statewide drought warnings. Businesses dependent on water, such as farms, food processors, landscapers, and car washes, were hit especially hard.

[https://climate.rutgers.edu/stateclim/?target=top ten 2024](https://climate.rutgers.edu/stateclim/?target=top_ten_2024)



CHAPTER 7: CLIMATE CHANGE AND SMALL BUSINESS: RISKS AND RESILIENCE (CONTINUED)

Wildfires:

The NJ Forest Fire Service responded to 884 wildfires from September to mid-November 2024, burning nearly 5,000 acres. Nine of these fires were classified as “major,” each threatening homes and businesses across South Jersey.

https://dep.nj.gov/newsrel/25_0012/



CHAPTER 7: CLIMATE CHANGE AND SMALL BUSINESS: RISKS AND RESILIENCE (CONTINUED)

Heatwaves and Energy Strain:

Heatwaves drove up cooling costs and led to power outages. Outdoor workers and businesses with temperature-sensitive operations (like bakeries and tech labs) struggled to operate under extreme conditions.

Air Quality Impacts:

Smoke from wildfires lowered air quality across the state, impacting on employees' health and discouraging foot traffic to downtown retail and hospitality districts.



CHAPTER 7: CLIMATE CHANGE AND SMALL BUSINESS: RISKS AND RESILIENCE (CONTINUED)

What Small Businesses Can Do?

Small businesses have a powerful role to play in building climate resilience and protecting local environments. Even modest changes can make a lasting impact. In New Jersey, many businesses are already taking action—whether it's installing energy-efficient equipment, reducing waste through composting, switching to reusable materials, or sourcing products locally. For example, Arlee's Raw Blends in Princeton reduces food waste through composting and donations, while Panini Bay Restaurant in Tuckerton elevated its building to protect against future floods. These steps not only help the environment but also improve operational efficiency and customer trust.



CHAPTER 7: CLIMATE CHANGE AND SMALL BUSINESS: RISKS AND RESILIENCE (CONTINUED)

These are only a few examples of how small businesses and institutions in New Jersey are adopting sustainable practices to enhance resilience against climate change. For more detailed case studies and guidance, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection offers excellent resources tailored for businesses seeking to implement sustainability initiatives:

<https://dep.nj.gov/sustainability/steps-to-sustainability/sustainability-guides-and-case-studies/>



CHAPTER 8: CONSUMERS STILL VALUE SUSTAINABILITY – EVEN IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

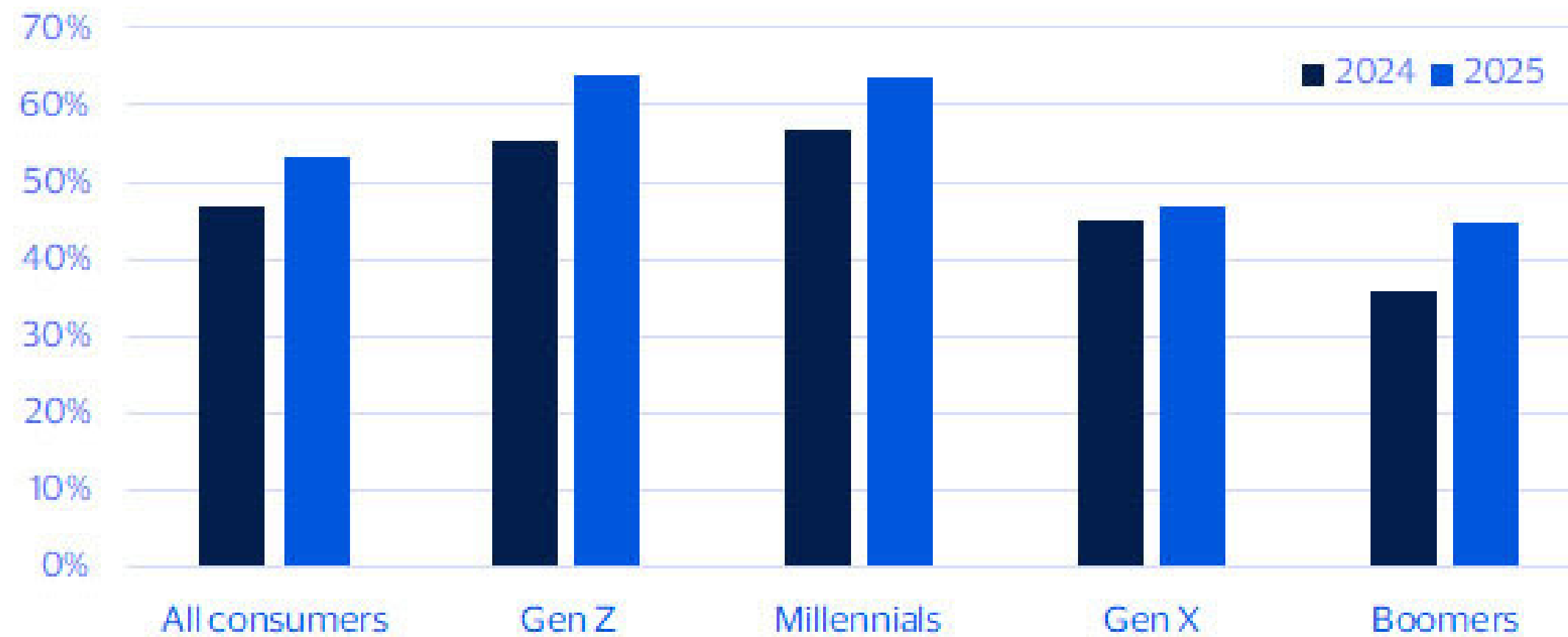
Despite ongoing inflation, an increasing number of US consumers are considering sustainability in their purchasing decisions. Confidence in the economy has been inching back up since April's sharp drop, and while people are feeling a little more optimistic about the months ahead, we're still not back to pre-recession comfort levels. Inflation is still a factor, especially when it comes to housing costs and homeowners' insurance, but that hasn't stopped shoppers from caring about where and how the products they buy are made.

In fact, a growing number of people, especially younger generations like Gen Z, say they prefer to support brands that take environmental responsibility seriously. Sometimes that even means choosing them over lower priced options. Whether that will continue as prices remain high is hard to say, but it's clear sustainability is no longer just a "nice-to-have" for many buyers.



CHAPTER 8: CONSUMERS STILL VALUE SUSTAINABILITY – EVEN IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

U.S. consumers show increasing interest in supporting green business with their purchase decisions. Percentage of consumers who indicate they make purchase decisions often or sometimes intentionally support environmentally responsible businesses.



Source: Visa Business and Economic Insights U.S. quarterly consumer surveys, July 2024 and July 2025.
The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index, released July 29, 2025.



FINAL THOUGHTS: DREAM, DO WHAT YOU CAN

Climate change is not a distant threat, it's here, and it's local. But with thoughtful planning and practical innovation, small businesses can survive and thrive in a changing environment.

By investing in resilience today, entrepreneurs across New Jersey and the United States have the power to lead us toward a stronger, more sustainable future.

One small step after another.

One action after another.

We can absolutely do this—together.



RESOURCES AND HELPFUL LINKS

[HTTPS://ENVIROSTEWARDS.RUTGERS.EDU/](https://envirostewards.rutgers.edu/)

[HTTPS://ENVIROSTEWARDS.RUTGERS.EDU/TAG/STEWARDS-IN-ACTION/](https://envirostewards.rutgers.edu/tag/stewards-in-action/)

[HTTPS://WWW.SUSTAINABLEJERSEY.COM/ABOUT/](https://www.sustainablejersey.com/about/)

[HTTPS://APNEWS.COM/ARTICLE/NEW-JERSEY-FOREST-FIRES](https://apnews.com/article/new-jersey-forest-fires)

[HTTPS://DEP.NJ.GOV/NEWSREL/21_0020/](https://dep.nj.gov/newsrel/21_0020/)

[HTTPS://WWW.CERES.ORG/](https://www.ceres.org/)

[HTTPS://DEP.NJ.GOV/CLIMATECHANGE/RESILIENCE/RESILIENCE-STRATEGY/](https://dep.nj.gov/climatechange/resilience/resilience-strategy/)

[HTTPS://CLIMATE.RUTGERS.EDU/STATECLIM/](https://climate.rutgers.edu/stateclim/)

[HTTPS://ENVIROSTEWARDS.RUTGERS.EDU/EARTH-DAY-EVERY-DAY/](https://envirostewards.rutgers.edu/earth-day-every-day/)

[HTTPS://ANJEC.ORG/](https://anjec.org/)

[HTTPS://NJNOPLASTICS.ORG/](https://njnoplastics.org/)

[HTTPS://BRNICHKARATE.COM/](https://brnichkarate.com/)

[HTTPS://AGGERGRAND.COM/](https://aggergrand.com/)

[HTTPS://DEVEZON.FR/](https://devezon.fr/)

[HTTPS://WWW.LIANNANELSON.COM/ABOUT/](https://www.liannanelson.com/about/)



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Environmental Stewards
New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

THANKYOU

*Special thanks to the **Rutgers Environmental Stewards Program** for providing the scientific foundation, encouragement, and sense of community that helped bring this project to life. I am especially grateful to Mike Jacob, Region 4 Coordinator, for approving my project. Your support was instrumental in transforming a personal passion into a practical guide for others. Thank you for empowering me with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to make sustainability more accessible for small businesses.*

To all of you who supported, inspired, and helped with this e-book — my heartfelt thanks. And finally, to the small business owners featured here: thank you for your courage, resilience, and honesty. Your stories are proof that meaningful change is possible, and I hope you will also be my readers as we continue this journey toward a more sustainable future.



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Environmental Stewards

New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

THANKYOU

*This publication was created in partnership with the **Rutgers Environmental Stewards (RES)** program. Since 2005, RES has trained volunteers in important environmental issues affecting New Jersey, equipping them to solve environmental problems in their own communities. The program is funded by Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. For more information visit envirostewards.rutgers.edu*



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Environmental Stewards

New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

CONTACT THE AUTHOR

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/rufiyablank/>

<https://rufiyadesign.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/rufiyadesign/>



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Environmental Stewards

New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station