



Alliance for Sustainable Colorado

Advancing Sustainability through Collaboration
among Business, Nonprofits, Government and Education



ANNUAL REPORT 2009



From Our Executive Director: A Look Back

2009 was a remarkable year for sustainability in Colorado, and for the Alliance. As Governor Ritter propelled the New Energy Economy, which resulted in clean tech business growth and made Colorado a leader in sustainability in the U.S., the Alliance's expansion of our Statewide Sustainability Network built the power of collaboration in the shift toward sustainability from "something we need to do" to "the way we do things." On behalf of our remarkable and committed staff and board, I'm proud to report some key accomplishments that illustrate the power of our collaborative work in all of our program areas.

POLICY: We maintained the momentum of our past successes in conceiving and shepherding efficiency bills in the built environment into legislation. In 2009 the Alliance instigated SB09-075, enabling clean, quiet neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) to be registered and used throughout the state. Advocates in Aspen were frustrated by not having consistent, statewide rules to license NEVs, which consequently prevented their widespread use. The Alliance initiated the bill to enable registration of NEVs, found sponsors, and educated lawmakers, including creating an Electric Vehicle Expo at the Capitol, bringing industry and lawmakers together. Governor Ritter signed SB09-075 and two other transportation-related bills into law in May at the Alliance Center. This story illustrates how the Alliance connects proponents of sustainability in outlying areas to lawmakers in the capitol to effect change.

ALLIANCE CENTER: Our 100-year-old historic building with two LEED certifications also saw significant collaborative accomplishments in 2009. We hosted over 700 visitors on educational tours, increased the number of nonprofit tenants we serve to over thirty, and provided the collaborative environment that contributed to passage of over 45 pieces of sustainability-related legislation. These bills advanced the "triple bottom line" of economic, social and environmental sustainability; over half were the work of three or more Alliance Center tenant organizations working together and with their non-tenant partners. That's the power of collaboration.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH: The Alliance held six regional Sustainability Roundtables attended by over 350 sustainability advocates across all sectors of society, who identified key sustainability successes and challenges across the state. The sessions culminated in the Alliance's first Statewide Sustainability Roundtable and in the summary 2009 Sustainability Roundtable Report presented by invitation to the governor's cabinet agencies. The Alliance also hosted key sustainable business meetings, such as Walmart's Colorado Green Jobs Council Summit, where Nate Hurst (Walmart's Director of Sustainability), L. Hunter Lovins (Natural Capitalism), and Clarke Becker (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment) joined more than three dozen other participants to explore the business drivers for sustainability in Colorado and illustrate the power that collaboration generates.



With your help, we will continue advancing sustainability through collaboration among all sectors and regions of Colorado. It's really true: "Together we're better."

Joanne Keys
Executive Director,
Alliance for Sustainable Colorado



ALLIANCE MISSION

The Alliance for Sustainable Colorado (“the Alliance”), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was founded in 2004 on the belief that the habitability of the planet is at risk, and that we need significant and immediate changes to restore and protect the ecological systems on which all life depends. While many organizations in business, the nonprofit sector, government and education are working on sustainability solutions, too often they work independently, or worse, at odds with one another. We are convinced that the global sustainability issues we face are urgent and require the concerted efforts of these sectors, working cohesively and collaboratively to develop policies and implement practices for a sustainable future. Hence our mission: *“Advancing sustainability through collaboration among business, nonprofits, government and education.”* We accomplish this through our statewide sustainability network and three integrated program areas:

The Alliance Center —
our living example of sustainability
and collaboration at work



Public Policy —
promoting
sound policies
that further
sustainability

Education & Outreach —
expanding the statewide
sustainability network
and providing the tools and
information for shifts to
sustainable practices





PROGRAM: PUBLIC POLICY

Promoting sound policies that further sustainability

Our Public Policy program promotes legislation for the long-term health of people, the environment and the economy. This means collaborating with other organizations to support their sustainable policy initiatives, educating legislators and the public on specific issues, hosting legislative briefings to create dialogue with policy makers, building cross-sector support to advance sustainable policies, and in some cases originating policy initiatives, finding sponsors and putting forth ideas that help sustainable practices become law.

Neighborhood Electric Vehicle (NEV) Bill and New Energy Expo

Our Public Policy staff played key roles in drafting and getting sponsors for SB09-075, the NEV bill, and achieving its passage by the legislature. It was one of three transportation bills signed into law by Governor Ritter at the Alliance Center. SB09-075 allows NEVs, which use no gasoline and have zero emissions, to drive on public roads with speed limits of 35 mph or lower, paving the way for the introduction to electric vehicles.

The Alliance orchestrated two events at the Capitol to educate lawmakers and the public: an NEV press event in February and the New Energy Expo in March. We worked closely with Senator Gail Schwartz on the Expo, which featured presentations by Governor Ritter and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., as well as a host of manufacturers demonstrating electric cars and trucks.

Legislative Briefings

The Alliance co-hosted and led the 5th Annual Sustainable Business Legislative Briefing at the Capitol in February on the topic, "What does the green economic recovery look like in Colorado?" The event featured presentations by Governor Ritter, Don Marostica of the Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade, and Brett KenCairn of Veterans Green Jobs. Approximately 100 participants from the legislature, business and nonprofit sectors, along with media representatives, took away better definitions of what a more sustainable Colorado would look like, comparisons of Colorado's progress to other states, and the governor's priorities for sustainability. These annual bipartisan briefings are held early in legislative sessions to inform business leaders about directions of sustainability legislation and enable conversations with leading government representatives and officials.



Far left: Governor Ritter signs SB09-075 at the Alliance Center.

Left: Sen. Schwartz and Bobby Kennedy, Jr. take a spin around the Capitol in an NEV.



PROGRAM: EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Expanding the statewide sustainability network

Our Education & Outreach program helps inform Colorado's community, business, educational and elected leaders to take action through better understanding of sustainability. These leaders share best practices and eliminate barriers to a more sustainable future. Education & Outreach includes organizing statewide roundtables, sustainable business exchanges and speaker series, and participating in and speaking at events and festivals throughout Colorado to educate and promote sustainability practices.

Colorado Sustainability Roundtable Series

More than 350 nonprofit, business, government and academic sustainability advocates participated in six roundtables held around the state to determine the key issues and challenges related to sustainability in each region, as well as to share best practices, lessons learned and opportunities. We found that a growing number of communities are making sustainability a priority and that leadership is crucial to progress. The roundtables not only provide a forum for sharing information, they are catalysts for continued progress on sustainability issues from community to state levels.

Sustainable Business Network

The Alliance founded the Sustainable Business Network (formerly the Alliance's Colorado Alliance of Sustainable Business Associations project) in 2004. The network comprises more than 25 Colorado business and trade associations, which are listed in the new Business Exchange Directory, available on the Alliance website. Our 2009 accomplishments include organizing and hosting three business exchanges, in which business leaders and legislators collaborated on policy initiatives and best-practice ideas.

Green Jobs for Women Pipeline Project

A partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau marked the Alliance's first federal contract and allowed us to further extend our network throughout the business and women's communities. The Pipeline Project is identifying resources, training and career opportunities for women in green jobs fields. In its first two months, the Project has built an advisory group that includes the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Denver Office of Economic Development and Red Rocks Community College. Over 160 organizations that fit into the green jobs pipeline have been identified and their resources posted on the web. This one-year project fills an important gap to build statewide awareness and coordination of green jobs until state agencies can take over.



Far left:
The A-Team rallies for a day of skiing with New Belgium Brewing.

Middle:
Governor Ritter and Dr. David Orr speak at Green Festivals; John Powers moderates.

Left:
Salida Roundtable.



PROGRAM: ALLIANCE CENTER

A living example of sustainability and collaboration in action

The Alliance Center is the tangible expression of our mission and a living model of collaboration. The 100-year-old warehouse, located in Denver's Lower Downtown (LoDo) Historic District, was purchased in 2004 to serve as a collaborative hub for organizations working on issues of sustainability. After "green" renovations, the Alliance Center earned two U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certifications (Existing Building Gold and Commercial Interiors Silver) along with USEPA Energy Star *Leader* status. Center tenants, working collaboratively with one another and with our Public Policy staff, have initiated and worked to pass legislation on a wide range of sustainability issues.

Virtual Tenancy

The Alliance Center has finite physical space and is now fully occupied. We enlarged the use and utility of our building as an asset for the community by expanding the number of virtual tenants. Virtual tenants can have addresses in the Alliance Center, subscribe to our phone system, use our meeting rooms, participate in meetings, and benefit from other shared services.

Tours

More than 700 people toured the Alliance Center in 2009, experiencing a sustainable workplace and collaboration in action. We guided an array of visitors through the center, including high school students who embraced a project to educate the public on energy, DU law students, and several notable visitors, among them Senator Michael Bennet, Secretary of State Bernie Buescher, environmental pioneer Lester Brown and Governor Ted Strickland of Ohio.

Sustainability Lunch and Speaker Series

The Alliance holds a monthly series of workshops that bring together tenants, neighbors and friends to educate and connect individuals and groups working on sustainability, and to help our tenants and neighbors build capacity and enhance services.

Seeking LEED Platinum and Launching Our Capital Campaign

With the 2011 five-year re-certification of the Center's 2006 LEED Existing Building Gold certification looming, the Alliance began a multi-year project to make the Center a showcase existing (and historic) building that is hyper-energy-efficient, pursuing NetZero energy use (uses no more energy than it produces) and becoming "carbon neutral."



Far left: The Alliance Center.

Left: One of many informational signs in the Center that we use for communicating with and about tenants.



When spider webs unite,
they can tie up a lion.

— Ethiopian proverb

33 Resident Tenants

6 Virtual Tenants

When you support the Alliance, you support all 39 nonprofits in their critical work.

Please visit us at the Alliance Center to see sustainability at work and meet the many nonprofits developing practices and policies toward a sustainable future.



THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

The collaboration we foster around the state through our three program areas results in widespread education, legislation and successful programs in sustainability. What we foster, we model. Our staff collaborates on a daily basis to ensure the success of Alliance programs and projects.

The Alliance Center provided the collaborative environment that supported passage of over 45 pieces of sustainability-related legislation in 2009. These bills advanced the “triple bottom line” of economic, social and environmental sustainability; over half were the work of three or more Alliance Center tenant organizations working together and with their non-tenant partners.



“The Alliance continues to be a vital partner in ensuring that legislation supporting the New Energy Economy is passed.”—Senator Gail Schwartz



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