

are using formal planning processes to guide future development and operations to sustain both the marketability of the destination and the quality of life of its residents.

From the five ecotourism goals for “establishing standards” discussed earlier, you can see how host communities can gain many potential benefits from incorporating the concepts into sustainable practices rather than simply chasing mass tourism by:

- Generating more income for more local community members,
- Promoting understanding between locals and members of different cultures,
- Educating local populations on matters of health, education, energy use, business, and environmental conservation, and
- Providing a financial incentive to protect and conserve a globally significant natural/cultural resource.<sup>40</sup>

Many of the techniques just described can also be used in already developed tourism areas to improve or sustain the existing tourism industry. Although applying one or two techniques will not change an area from a mass tourism to an ecotourism destination, simply to adopt efforts such as water conservation and sign codes (limiting their size, height, and lighting) can help alleviate problems that may have arisen. Research has shown that there are some identifiable barriers that discourage customers from participating in green practices (e.g., only having sheets changed on stays of three or more nights, using key cards to turn power to the room off and on) including inconvenience, perceptions of cost cutting, and concerns about decreased luxury. Interestingly, although customers expressed interest in being green, they are more likely to behave with a higher level of environmental responsibility at home than in a hotel.<sup>41</sup>

As you saw in Chapter 12, there are other means of managing the physical and social carrying capacity of developing and developed tourism areas. For example, to eliminate crowds, policies of dispersion have been used. Rather than allowing one area of a destination to become the center of all tourism activity, the infrastructure and superstructure can be spread throughout the region to force visitors to be more evenly distributed. Zoning can also be used to limit the amount of development that can occur in any one place.<sup>42</sup>

To promote sustainability and manage the carrying capacity of specific sites, restrictive entry is often used. Sometimes the number of visitors is limited through reservations, tickets, or a lottery system. At other times, the number can be limited by charging higher fees, thus limiting the number of visitors able and willing to pay the price of admission, and usually reducing the number of times any tourist chooses to visit the site. Limiting types of usage can also reduce the number of users of a site or the impact to the environment any user has on it.

When it comes to sustainability, talk is cheap and putting sustainable practice in place can be priceless for the environment. One way for any tourism or hospitality organization that has a building to prove that they are dedicated to sustainable practices is to obtain **LEED** (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification from the nonprofit U.S. Green Building Council. LEED certification can be obtained for new construction as well as renovations. According to the U.S. Green Building Council, in the United States alone there are over five billion square feet of lodging space dedicated to guest rooms, event space, and public facilities.<sup>43</sup>

There are four levels of certification; starting at certified and then moving up through silver and gold, finally reaching the ultimate level, platinum. Each of these levels is reached by accumulating points in eight categories.

- Sustainable Sites—consideration for the entire ecosystem including land and water.
- Water Efficiency—consideration for water consumption.
- Energy and Atmosphere—consideration for energy sources and use.