



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Audubon International Celebrates Green Communities For Earth Day

Amelia Island Partnership Sets Stewardship Standard

April 19, 2024 – As the world celebrates Earth Day on April 22, [Audubon International](#) – the environmentally focused non-profit organization offering members numerous certifications and conservation initiatives to protect the areas where we all live, work, and play – reports that interest in its respected, vetted, third-party certification programs is growing beyond its core golf course constituency into the hotel/hospitality sectors, which in turn leads to entire destinations working together to gain Sustainable Communities certification.

Nowhere is this trend more visible than on Amelia Island in the northeast corner of Florida, which has coupled its deep history of community stewardship with ongoing efforts to partner with Audubon International on several fronts.

By mid-2023, 10 Amelia Island resort properties had achieved Green Lodging certification, and several more hotels are expected to join the ranks in the coming months and years. This commitment is spreading to restaurants and other businesses in the form of Green Hospitality certification applications, all of which is in addition to the island-wide certification as a Sustainable Community they earned in 2020.

“Amelia Island has a unique ecosystem, and the local stakeholders understand how valuable and fragile it is,” says Fred Realbuto, Audubon International’s interim Chief Operating Officer and previous director of Green Lodging/Green Hospitality certifications. “The destination has prioritized sustainability, taking a thoughtful and strategic approach to signage, building codes, and rate of growth. This helps protect the environment and preserve their small-town charm as well.”

The Sustainable Communities certification is founded in the three pillars of sustainability – a healthy local environment, quality of life for citizens, and economic vitality – and is tailored to each community to ensure that its specific needs, priorities, resources, and challenges are addressed.

Amelia Island’s current Green Lodging push started when five hotels and resorts applied for Audubon International certification with financial support from the Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau (Amelia Island CVB).

“We partner with Audubon International to achieve the initial certification, and then fund the certification for as long as our lodging partners maintain the standards,” says Maurie Dugger, Amelia Island CVB Director of Community Engagement. “It’s a worthy investment that allows us to confidently claim we’re doing this correctly. It is important that what we’re

doing has a real, verifiable impact. Many travellers want to have a positive impact on the community they're visiting, but they also want to travel to places that are focused on the right things. The environment and fragile ecosystem that makes Amelia Island so special is important to everyone who calls this island home. We look forward to sharing this rich treasure for generations of residents and visitors to come."

With more boutique lodging partners set to go for Green Lodging certification and the Green Hospitality program launching, both Dugger and Realbuto see Amelia Island continuing to pursue its standing as an example of what vision, foresight, planning and partnership with local stakeholders – and, of course, Audubon International – can do in service to true sustainability.

"We want to become the first destination in Florida to have all of our lodging partners go through the Green Lodging certification," Dugger said.

For more on Audubon International Sustainable Communities and Green Lodging certification as well as its programs for golf certifications, visit www.auduboninternational.org.

On Social Media:

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About Audubon International

An environmentally focused non-profit organization, Audubon International offers members numerous certifications and conservation initiatives to protect the areas where we all live, work, and play. Its certifications are designed to increase environmental awareness, encourage sustainable environmental efforts, and educate both its members and their communities.

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