

NJ SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS COUNCIL

PRINCIPLES

Introduction

Innovative businesses have in recent years realigned their principles and developed a new set of practices that point the way to a more sustainable economy. Now, hundreds of thousands of businesses, large and small and across all sectors, prove every day that an expanded definition of success is possible. Based on their proven approaches, NJSBC seeks to create the framework for a new and dynamic 21st century economy for the Garden State, based on the “triple bottom line”: people, profit, and planet. We can achieve economic development that is compatible with shared prosperity and environmental stewardship.

Principles

NJSBC believes in the power of a market-based economy. We also believe that to continue enjoying the benefits of market capitalism we need a structure that is good for businesses, for all New Jerseyans, for all Americans, and for the seven billion people who share this planet.

We see that five core principles must be held in balance as our essential pillars for sustainable business success:

- 1. Market Economy: A market-based business system must remain the heart of our economy, but it also must account for the human health and environmental costs that otherwise are passed on to the general public.** Our capitalist system spurs innovation and efficiency, and allocates resources better than any alternative yet devised. True markets are part of the solution, characterized by honest competition, and lacking unfair advantages and subsidies. They should also include a variety of ownership mechanisms such as cooperatives, community and social enterprises, benefit corporations and employee-owned businesses to ensure a balanced and robust system.
- 2. Sensible Measures and Regulations: Good rules help us tap the power of innovation while protecting the sustainability of business.** Sensible regulations are essential to foster a sound economy. Regulations promote fair competition and innovation while protecting and strengthening safeguards for public health and safety. By placing reasonable limits on the power of traditional industries and technologies, they help ensure the stability of the financial system and the adequate flow of capital to develop opportunities for new entrants to the marketplace. Regulations and rules should be devised with all stakeholders having a voice at the table. Such regulation protects against actions that hurt the environment, and the public, and ultimately damage the economy itself.

3. **Broad Prosperity: Everyone deserves an opportunity to participate in and prosper from a sustainable economy.** It is the right thing to do, and a matter of pride and national self-interest, to manage the economy in a way that engages the capabilities, creativity, and industriousness of all Americans. Quality and relevant education must be a fundamental right and obligation for all. At the same time, we have a right to expect businesses to provide living wage jobs and take actions that contribute to, not detract from, the creation of healthy and vibrant communities.
4. **Sustainability: The business sector must make decisions that take into account the long-term needs of people, the planet and profits.** We must manage the economy to meet the needs of the current generation without impairing the ability of future generations to do so. Stewardship and regeneration of natural resources throughout their lifecycle is an essential foundation, as is reinvestment in communities that fosters long-term economic vitality.
5. **Democracy Works: When all stakeholders have a voice, we can drive economic and societal change that benefits all.** A market is nothing more or less than a set of rules and conventions negotiated through a political process. A sustainable market should be structured and managed to be fair, transparent, well-regulated, and fully accountable. Additionally, we must ensure that our democracy, in particular our electoral and legislative process, is not controlled by just the wealthiest, but with the full participation of all stakeholders.

An approach to the economy based on these principles would preserve the benefits of a market economy while guarding against the overuse of resources and maximizing human potential. It is clear that innovation and growth are now inextricably tied to sustainability. With smart policies and priorities, we can ensure that businesses continue to profit while enhancing the lives of people and protecting our environment.

So let us choose wisely. It is time to reshape our economy toward a vibrant, equitable and sustainable future that meets our needs today and for generations to come.