



## GREEN BUSINESS EVALUATION

Acorn Organic Hair Salon

The Green Alliance will consider the following factors in evaluating your business' commitment to environmental responsibility. This is meant to be a guide, not a test, and will help you think about ways to move toward further sustainability. It will also help us promote what makes you "green" to local consumers and provide transparency to the community. A green business will bring sustainable practices into some or all of the following aspects of commerce: production and service, supply chain management, employment, investment, community relations, and vendors.

### ACORN ORGANIC SALON

#### Green Products

1. Do you offer a green version of a good or service? What makes it green? **BONUS POINT**

3) Yes, everything  2) Mostly (> 50%)  1) Some (<50%)  0) None  N/A

Sustainability is the guiding principle at Acorn. Every aspect of the salon, from how the space was renovated, to everyday business practices, to how they manage waste and recycle, to the hair products themselves – all of these things are green at Acorn. Owners Allison Degan and Laura MacKay set out to create a consciously green salon that was different from any other in the region. Even before opening, Degan and MacKay spent months researching every step of their business development and product, and making sure that each was as sustainable as possible. As they were creating their vision of a sustainable salon, they only had a few examples nationwide to guide them; these they researched extensively, taking particularly useful information from a "Green" issue of a leading industry magazine. Every product used or sold at Acorn is vetted for its toxicity and the naturalness of ingredients. Hair color is one of the most toxic products used on the human body – Acorn prides themselves on offering the least toxic hair color on the market. Using the cosmetic ingredient analysis site [www.skindeep.com](http://www.skindeep.com), as well as other research results, Acorn chose what they believe to be the safest organic color line available. In preparation for opening her salon, Acorn co-owner, Allison Degan became a self-educated expert on hair and body products. "There is a serious lack of regulation in the skincare/hair care products industry, particularly when it comes to hair color. At most salons and stores you never know what you are getting – unless you have spent a serious amount of time researching each ingredient and understanding what they do – you are really taking a chance on your body," explains Allison. Acorn does not carry any dyes that contain P.P.D or para-phenylenediamine, which is an aromatic amine compound found in particularly high concentration in dark hair colors. P.P.D is used in textile and fur dyes and is not really regulated for use directly on humans. P.P.D can cause dermatitis and swelling of the face and scalp; indeed many women have allergic reactions so severe, they have gone into anaphylactic shock. Fragrance is another ingredient that Acorn watches closely. Fragrances are not regulated and manufacturers don't have to disclose the ingredients in fragrance; for this reason, Acorn carries mainly unperfumed products. In choosing the products Acorn would carry, Degan researched every ingredient extensively and out of hundreds vetted, felt secure about only 3 product lines that met her high standards of purity and safety. Beyond product, every other corner of Acorn's business is executed with a green approach. All cut hair is collected and then recycled; sent, at Acorn's cost, to a company that makes mats to absorb oil spills. Acorn's appointment book is paperless, (customers have to ask specially for a receipt!) and nearly every piece of furniture and equipment in the new salon is salvaged, recycled or obtained used. Instead of buying special plastic bags for hair coloring jobs, Acorn reuses plastic shopping bags that clients donate. All of the magazines and books at Acorn are donated and recycled, instead of the usual reams of magazine subscriptions most salons carry. Acorn doesn't use any disposable cups, giving clients their own mug or glass during appointments and offering tap water instead of bottled water. The bathroom uses no paper towels, offering hand towels instead. The Acorn space was gutted and renovated personally by owners Allison Degan and Laura MacKay, using zero VOC paints and finishes, sustainable cork flooring and a full electrical and plumbing overhaul that substantially reduced electric and water use.

2. Do you offer it as a choice alongside other non-green products or is it all you offer? **BONUS POINT**

3) Only green products sold  2) More (>50%)  1) Some (>50%)  0) None  N/A

Every service and product at Acorn is green at a standard far above certified organic or just natural. Many, many organic products that Degan researched did not meet her stricter standards. "Our products are so pure here you could eat them," jokes Degan. Indeed Acorn's sustainability ethic moves well beyond the products they use and sell – it touches every aspect of the salon; when someone uses the rest room and isn't offered disposable paper products, when a client gets a drink in a washable coffee mug or glass, when a Hannaford plastic shopping bag is used and reused instead of a "specially" ordered, one-time use, "hair coloring", processing cap, or when a client skims a recycled and donated magazine while waiting. Acorn's green standards are so far above the norm that they actually apologize for carrying the one nationally recognized hair care line Pureology, which is both vegan and organic. "Pureology is not totally up to snuff with my rating and research," explains Degan. "But we are doing so much here at Acorn that is just downright different, we need to be careful that the customer can find something identifiable and familiar, we really felt we had to have at least one product line on the shelves that the customer would recognize." At Acorn, Degan and MacKay have specifically created an atmosphere that is different

from typical salons. “You might notice that we don’t have the usual glossy and glamorous pictures of perfect ladies with perfect hair. Well those posters you see at other salons are advertising essentially toxic products; the women look that way after they have been sprayed, massaged and dunked in scores of products and services that are not sustainable. Its not that you can’t look that fabulous naturally because you certainly can and we can do it for you here,” says MacKay. Indeed the only glossy poster at Acorn is the one advertising, Matter of Trust, the company that receives the recycled cut hair and makes super-absorbent mats that help clean up oil spills on our oceans.

**3. Do you educate the customer about what makes this choice sustainable; encourage it? How?**

3) Yes, major part of business strategy  2) Yes, but not central focus of sales/marketing  1) Minimal education  0) No education/encouragement  N/A

One of the best parts of a hair salon is the opportunity to have substantial conversations with every client that comes through the door. All of Acorn’s stylists talk to clients extensively about the sustainable choices that have been made at the business and with the products used and sold. Every employee is intimately aware of and engaged in the green ethics of the salon and able to outline them to each customer as they sit and have their hair cut, colored or styled. Acorn is not afraid to talk “green” and to explain to each customer why they made these choices and why they are better for the customer and the business alike. “We have not had a customer yet who was not interested in the environmentally-friendly business choices we have made. As a rule we go over our policies, especially on the safety of the product lines we carry, with every client. We have done so much research already, we know people don’t have the time to do it themselves, so we share it with them, most times showing them the **Skindeep** website and how they can use it themselves to check on products they use at home,” says Degan. Acorn is very aggressive about product ingredients and very generous about sharing the information they have gathered – Degan often takes time to not only familiarize customers with the internet sources for finding out about product ingredients but she also will walk them through the details of the product the salon carries. A informational binder is centrally located and available for customers to read the specifics on every sustainable choice the salon has made as well as details on dangerous ingredients to watch out for in body products and other relevant articles on health and environmental safety in the hair care industry. All of this information is shared at every event that Acorn participates in; they have been very forthcoming about healthy hair products at the Dover Apple Harvest as well as the Locks of Love event. Degan has spoken on community radio, WSCA about product ingredients and running a green salon. In addition, Acorn plans on using their website to disseminate green hair care info...as well as a clearing house for individuals to learn about what makes Acorn green and educate themselves about product ingredients. But Acorn’s biggest environmental education campaign exists in the little informational signs that pepper the salon; a pleasant and well orchestrated effort that explains every sustainable choice at Acorn and why. Below is a list of some of the signs posted at Acorn.

1. The furniture is labeled as reclaimed/recycled/used.
2. The walls and exposed wood are labeled for zero VOC paints and polyurethanes
3. The floor is labeled for its cork flooring.
4. A sign near the nail polish explains that they are vegan and free of DBP, a known carcinogen that leaks through the nails and into the body as well as being free of formaldehyde and toluene; toxins in most nail polishes that are hazardous to our community landfills. A sign outlines Acorn’s recycling program and encourages clients to participate.
5. A sign explains that none of the products at Acorn are tested on animals.
6. A sign promotes A Matter of Trust, the organization that makes oil spill mats with all the recycled hair from Acorn.
7. A sign promotes the book and magazine recycling and swap at Acorn
8. Acorn also sponsors a “purse” swap, where clients can leave an old handbag and take a new “used” one, in an effort to reduce consumption and reuse good items.
9. Acorn outlines its policy of using and reusing plastic shopping bags instead of one-time-use color and perm plastic caps.
10. A local business board/events calendar promotes local businesses and community events.

**4. Does the customer pay more for the “green” option? BONUS POINT**

3) Costs less or same  2) costs a little more  1) Costs significantly more  0) almost cost-prohibitive  N/A

All of the services at Acorn are significantly LESS than most comparable high-end salons in the area. Even their ultra-safe, ultra-natural products that are sold cost the same or less than traditional top-shelf, salon products – even though they are superior health and performance wise. While the green renovations that Degan and MacKay were so diligent about, did cost somewhat more than if they had renovated without thought for sustainability, the cost was not so much more that they had to pass it on to the consumer. The zero VOC paint from Safe Coat does cost more, as does sustainable cork flooring, but other choices such as not using polyurethanes and not purchasing plastic processing caps, and sensible, efficient plumbing and electric redos allowed Acorn to save money; (less water and electricity used). Acorn was able to offset some of the more expensive sustainable choices with money-saving sustainable business practices, such as buying used or discarded furniture, and eliminating paper use with hand towels and paperless appointments and receipts. For example, Acorn uses only green, non-toxic cleaning supplies but off-sets their slightly higher price but doing their own cleaning as well as reducing waste, and thus waste disposal costs. Acorn’s business plan included a conscious choice to keep their prices under comparable salons in an effort to attract customers to the “green” salon not just for environmental reasons but also financial. They are very keen on “normalizing” the concept of a “green salon”, something that everyone can afford. “We knew we were doing something very different here and we don’t want to scare customers away by high prices, we want them to feel like they can afford to try something new, and of course we want folks to understand that its possible to go green without breaking the bank,” explains MacKay. So while indeed their building start-up costs were higher, so much of the conservation and efficiency ethic that Acorn is practicing, actually saves them money. And of course they hope to attract customers who choose them because of their sustainable practices and affordable price.

5. Is there a greener version of your product? If so, what prohibits you from offering it?

- 3) No, offer the greenest X    2) Yes, working toward offering    1) Yes, but not in business plan    0) Yes, no intent to offer    N/A

Acorn offers the greenest product available. Everything used on clients or offered retail has met higher and more stringent standards than any organic label. Degan, has made it her job to know the dangers of typical ingredients, where they come from and what they can do to humans and the environment and she has applied that knowledge very thoroughly to every product that comes into Acorn. Well before they opened, much effort was put into making sure that the products carried were the absolute greenest on the market. "Having said that, it's not easy to be green in the hair industry because so much information is "left out" of ingredient lists, and these are products that are not strictly regulated because they are not ingested. So the end result is that despite the fact that it seems like there are so many "natural" products on the market now, if you go through each and every ingredient on the package, even in the most organic lines, there are going to be some very questionable ingredients," adds Degan. For Acorn, months of safe product research resulted in a limited number of choices, despite the vast array of beauty products out there. So Acorn does feel constrained by an industry that is coming late to the sustainability table. "Despite a lot of organic looking salons, when we set out to create a truly green salon, we were shocked at how little substance there was to the natural and organic claims of many salons and products, so we really wanted to do it right, from top to bottom. From the renovation of our space to the shampoo we are using in house," MacKay says. As a young business, (Acorn only opened in July 2008), Degan and MacKay admit there are some business practices and salon logistics that could be even more sustainable; these changes will come as the business grows. They are somewhat constrained by the fact that they are in a rented space and so have not been able to fully control their energy use and by an industry that has always depended on toxics for services such as perms and color. Acorn has been frustrated by some aspects of hair care that just don't offer sustainable versions. For example, they have tried alternatives to one-time use foil wrap, (it can not be recycled), but found that the limited "reusable" foil on the market performed poorly. And there have been some services that are so toxic that Acorn has decided not to offer them at all – hair relaxers are one of those items that have no sustainable alternatives; Acorn was so displeased with its danger level that they have made a choice not to offer hair relaxing period. There are also aspects of all salons that are governed by state laws which do not leave room for sustainable options: for example every salon must use Barbacide, an anti-fungicide dipping agent that is not environmentally-friendly, yet they are required by law to use it. The state also requires salons to use a certain percentage of cleaning products that are certified by the EPA and there are no organics on that EPA-certified list. The NH State Board of Cosmetology even requires all salons to provide paper towels and to wash each cutting cape after each use even though this practice makes for substantial waste in hot water and electricity use.

6. Do you use/offer organically grown components? Locally grown?

- 3) Yes, almost everything X    2) Most (> 50%)    1) Some (<50%)    0 None    N/A

Most of the products Acorn carries are above organic. Degan feels that often times with hair and body products, some organic ingredients are not enough and so Acorn goes beyond just searching for the organic label but delves further into other aspects of ingredients that exist in such small quantities that they are not required to be organic or are not offered in organic versions. "People would be surprised just how many "organics" have harsh chemicals and unregulated, potentially dangerous fragrances in them. What you end up with is chemicals added to a few organic components. At Acorn we are looking for organic but we are also looking for a product free of perfumes, dyes and parabens," explains Degan. Parabens are chemical preservatives which are very cheap and readily available, thus commonly used in body products which act as estrogen when absorbed into the skin and body; the public is just beginning to learn about the dangers of parabens. Acorn is very vocal about the fact that a product can be certified as organic but can contain other ingredients that are not safe. Because Acorn has such stringent safety tests for the products it will carry, sometimes "local" is not an option. But now that the salon is established it is beginning to pursue and research locally made natural products in a conscious effort to connect with local women who are making truly natural products including Stolat, made right here in Portsmouth, Lion's Tooth Herbs from Eliot and other Seacoast options, many of which use herbs grown in their own local gardens. Acorn tries to shop beauty supplies as local as possible, often getting much of their small beauty accessories/equipment at Sallys Beauty Supplies in Somersworth. All of their "salvaged" materials were sourced locally, with used perm rods, furniture, magazines, books and handbags all coming from local people on donation or swap.

7. Are you educated about greener options so that you can help the consumer make better choices?

- 3) Yes, central to business plan X    2) Yes, portion of business strategy    1) Somewhat, not given full attention    0) Not educated    N/A

Getting the consumer and themselves educated is central to Acorn's business strategy. Degan and MacKay had to educate themselves about how to develop, design and implement the greenest possible salon and they feel they have never stopped learning. The more they learned about sustainability the more they realized that this ethic had to be applied to every aspect of the salon or it wouldn't work. "This business is in constant green evolution," says Degan. Acorn's owners were not initially aggressive environmentalists but as they began researching the topic, they learned about the Volatile Organic Compounds in typical paints that continue to off-gas years after they have dried, and they learned what made nail polishes so toxic; they discovered the cancer causing agents in most hair dyes and also learned that there were ways to provide this service without the toxins. Acorn stays updated and passes that knowledge on to their customers gleaned from a myriad of informational sources: The Skin Deep Cosmetic Data Base, The Cosmetic Ingredients Review website, The Environmental Workers Group publications, Daily Green, Tree Hugger, Ideal Byte and many others. Acorn's informational binder is constantly being updated, and as they learn, they pass on this information to clients, whose "ear" they have sometimes for hours at a time. "We are now turning to our website because we know that can be an excellent portal for disseminating this health information we have gathered. We want to share it because these are facts that once you know them...you feel like you must share

them with your community. We have done the research for you...we've slogged thru the studies and made substantial efforts to understand what is safe, what is not and why. We want to share this knowledge with the Seacoast," says Degan.

**8. Are there greener options/products that you plan on offering in the future?**

- 3) Yes, tangible plans with date  2) Yes, no specific date 1) Possibly, investigating possibilities, no solid plan  
0) No, never N/A

In the short term, Acorn is hoping to find a sustainable alternative to one-time foil use or perhaps get rid of foils all together. The website is a current focus for disseminating all the info Degan has gleaned on products and their ingredients. Acorn is constantly searching for more product lines that fit their safety guidelines and have a particular goal of having a large share of those products locally produced. And while Acorn has purchased software that helps them reduce paper, they hope to have a fully paperless appointment system in the future. MacKay has researched full spectrum lights and has already picked out a system that will replace the current lighting but it may be sometime before they have the capital investment to make the change. These full-spectrum lights are not only energy efficient, using 80% less energy, but also have proven health benefits to workers and customers alike; they generate a light very closely resembling natural light. As a longer term project, Acorn has researched the possibility of a green roof in the summer on their flat roof and has discussed the possibility with the landlord. Both MacKay and Degan dream of a full-scale wellness center and spa someday that would be powered by wind and solar. They see Acorn as a jumping off point, a place to start; long-term they'd like to see a larger sustainable operation that is influential in all aspects of health and wellness in the community.

**Energy Use:**

**9. Have you conducted an energy audit? Identified areas of inefficiency? Taken corrective measures?**

- 3) Yes, official audit completed, corrective measures taken 2) Audit in process, has committed to official audit/official audit completed, no corrective measures taken  1) unofficial audit, corrective measures  
0) No official or unofficial audit, no measures taken

MacKay and Degan applied for an audit with PSNH and were ready to make the appointment when their landlord refused and thus PSNH said they could not do the audit without the landlords blessing. This has been a difficult issue for Acorn even before they opened as they wanted to do the audit so as to get assistance both financial and informational on the full-scale renovations they had to do to the space. Unfortunately PSNH requires the entire building undergo the evaluation and the landlord is resistant. Despite the landlords foot-dragging...Acorn used substantial insulation to save on heat loss and redesigned the plumbing and electric with efficiency and conservation a priority. They reduced the electrical and water outlets by half and replaced inefficient windows with super insulated windows at their own cost despite their renter status.

**10. Have you invested in energy efficient technology/equipment/appliances? Energy Star?**

- 3) Yes, substantial equipment changes  2) Some equipment changes 1) minor equipment change  
0) No new equipment N/A

The refrigerator is Energy Star as are the handheld hairdryers, (low EMF which dry hair faster and so are on for less time). They tried to purchase the larger salon-style hair dryers in an energy efficient model but they don't exist. Instead, Acorn reduced the number of large dryers from 6 to 2 and the number of hair-washing stations from 4 to 2. A small energy efficient dishwasher allows Acorn to wash the reusable mugs and cups offered to clients instead of bottled water or soft drinks.

**11. If you heat with oil, are you using Bioheat or some other renewable source (wood)?**

- 3) Yes, B20 or 100% wood 1) Yes, B5 or some wood 0) No, Oil N/A no oil system

Heating with propane. As renters no choice in system or fuel.

**12. If your business is in Maine or Massachusetts, are you using Green Electricity?**

- 3) Yes 1) Extenuating circumstances make cost-prohibitive 0) ME or MA resident, no Green Elec.  
N/A (NH res. only)

**13. Have you looked at water usage and taken steps toward efficiency and conservation?**

- 3) Yes, steps taken  2) Some conservation measures 1) Minor measures taken 0) None N/A

When Acorn renovated the space they looked at water use specifically for conservation and efficiency. They capped off many unnecessary plumbing outlets/inlets and reduced hair washing bays by more than half. Acorn has a policy to consciously turn off the water in between washing and conditioning so that water is not needlessly running as it does at many salons. When they started renovations, Acorn seriously considered a grey water recycling system that would recycle water from the washing sinks for reuse into the toilets but unfortunately this proved cost prohibitive as well as impossible combined with other plumbing problems which required them to get a flow-up toilet. During renovations they chose to have only 2 washing bays, down from the 4 that were in the previous salon, allowing them to cap off more than half of the existing water flow. Acorn has just purchased a used Energy Star washer for the salon (capes and hand towels must be washed daily).

**14. Do you offer bottled water at your office/store for employees & customers? (This is highly energy intensive and unnecessary in a developed country like the U.S.)**

- 3) No water & has business that would traditionally offer  2) No bottles, replaced with cooler /minimal sales  
1) limited sales 0) Yes, bottles N/A

Acorn saves money and the environment with their "tap water only" policy and by using real mugs and glasses. Where most businesses would use electricity to cool a water cooler with water delivered by Poland Spring or some other water company...Acorn proudly offers their customers Dover water in a reusable mug or glass. A small energy efficient countertop dishwasher keeps them clean. They also refill gallon jugs with tap water and place them in the energy star refrigerator for those who want cold water.

**15. Do you buy "green tags" to off-set business energy use? (Green tags are energy credits which**

directly invest in renewable projects; see [carbonfreedom.org](http://carbonfreedom.org) or call 802.859.0099.)

3) Yes                      1) Irregularly                      0) No                      N/A X

Acorn is a very small and modest salon. This small business does not use enough electricity to necessitate green tags.

16. Do you shut-down/unplug equipment after hours on weekends or when not in use? (*Vampire loads waste enormous amounts of energy; turning off 1 computer saves 500 lbs. of CO2 yearly.*)

3) Yes X                      1) Sometimes                      0) No                      N/A

Conservation is employed in every aspect of energy use at Acorn. Everything is shutdown when not in use and all equipment that should be shut down is on a power strip.

17. Have you switched to CFL's? (*CFLs use 66% less energy – save \$45 over the life of the bulb!*)

3) Yes, all lighting                      1) Some lighting X                      0) None                      N/A

The track lighting came with incandescent bulbs but as they burn out those incandescents are being replaced by CFL's. Acorn hopes to redo their entire lighting with full-spectrum lights in the future.

18. Do you dispose of CFL's properly?

3) Yes X                      0) No                      N/A

19. Do you turn off all lights after hours or if not using a room? Educate employees to do the same?

3) Extensive conservation ethic, includes education X                      1) Some conservation, some education  
0) No effort                      N/A

All the employees at Acorn are trained and invested in the conservation ethic. A sign in the bathroom reminds customers to kill the lights after leaving and educates the customer on just how much energy and thus money it costs to leave a light on unnecessarily.

20. Do you have motion sensors installed to turn off lights when there is no movement in the room?

3) Yes, all lighting                      1) Some or one installed                      0) No                      N/A X

Acorn has a very simplistic lighting system and they do not think they could install motion sensors because the space is so small and the wiring is all interconnected. In addition, they deal with customers and the bathroom light by a well placed sign reminding them to turn it off.

21. If you have vending machines, have you installed Energy Misers? (*Energy Misers essentially shut-down the equipment during the hours of least use.*)

3) Yes, all machines                      1) Some or one installed                      0) None                      N/A X No vending machines.

22. Have you considered investing in highly efficient LED lighting systems?

3) LED in use                      1) Researched retrofitting X                      0) No, not interested                      N/A

MacKay has a plan to install highly efficient, LED, full spectrum lights in the salon within the next year. Not only does the system she has selected use 80% less energy, but it will create a healthier environment for employees and customers because it mimics natural light.

23. Is your business lit-up at night? Is your sign lit-up all night? Switch these to CFLs or LEDs?

3) Lit up, using LED lighting                      1) Business lit up, using CFL or fluorescents/timers in place                      0) Lit up using incandescent, no timer  
N/A X

Acorn is completely dark inside when they are not open, (this despite the common practice of many downtown businesses to light-up at least part of the retail interior after hours). The outdoor sign is not lit at all.

24. What is your business' carbon footprint? (*Calculate it at [www.terrapass.com](http://www.terrapass.com)*)

3) Calculated, show results                      1) Have not calculated officially but have taken major strides to reduce based upon rough estimate X                      0) Not calculated

Had Acorn had their landlord's blessing, they would have known their building's carbon footprint through the PSNH audit they had originally requested. Although they have not calculated it independently, Acorn says that they will do so in the future and they continue to push their landlord to allow an audit of the entire building.

25. Have you tried to reduce your business' CO2 emissions? If so, by how much?

3) Yes, tangible plan to reduce implemented for extensive carbon reduction                      2) Tangible plan with slight reduction  
X                      1) Loose efforts at energy conservation that may have resulted in lower CO2                      0) No, Nothing done, nothing planned

Because they did a full renovation of the space with energy conservation and efficiency a priority, Acorn is sure that they have significantly reduced the carbon footprint from the traditional salon that was in that space prior. Acorn invested in substantial insulation to reduce heat loss, and thus uses far less energy to heat what had been a very outdated and drafty space before the renovation, (much of it uninsulated!). Indeed during renovations they found an extra ceiling space that was uninsulated and much of the walls filled with old wiring instead of insulation. Renovations had the electrician remove more than half of the existing outlets for reduced electricity use as well as fewer large dryers for less drying time. There is a TV in the salon but it is kept turned off and unplugged unless a customer specifically asks to watch it; it is not kept on as a default setting as most salons do. Small steps like using recycled shopping bags many times instead of purchasing, one-time perm and color caps and washing out and reusing color and perm plastic gloves, mean Acorn uses less petroleum-based plastics. Reusable mugs and glasses replace disposables and hand towels replace paper towels. Ultra-efficient hand-held hair dryers dry hair faster for reduced electricity use. An energy efficient refrigerator and small dishwasher use less electricity. The choice of recycled furniture meant that some items did not get burnt in our landfill and other items weren't produced new for Acorn's use. A recycled/donated book and magazine swap mean less subscriptions and books being reused instead of tossed or bought new. Cork flooring from natural cork, zero VOC paints and low VOC polyurethane for exposed wood all contribute indirectly to lower carbon emissions. Lighting upgrades to more modern fixtures and CFL's have reduced electrical CO2



emissions. Acorn does not purchase any printed plastic bags for retail sales, instead they accept used plastic bags and send product home in them.

26. Do you use any renewable technology? Have you explored wind/solar/geothermal?

- 3) Yes, hardware on sight    2) Tangible plans for future     1) Researching/researched options, not possible  
0) No attention given

Acorn has researched the possibility of putting a green roof on their current flat roof and has even talked with the landlord about the possibility. They would most likely start small, with a basic natural green carpet in the summer months. Acorn feels this is important because they do have a flat roof which is located in a sea of pavement and other roofs and building coverage in downtown Dover. Wind and solar are probably well into the future but they are on the map for Acorn; capital and site permitting.

27. Do you encourage/educate employees to use energy responsibly at home?

- 3) Yes, major part of business strategy     2) Some, not central focus to training    1) Minimal education, not comfortable preaching  
0) No education/encouragement    N/A

All of Acorn's employees are steeped in the environmental message. What's exciting is that they are people who would not usually have a vested interest in the green message – most stylists at a simple salon would not be so well educated in the health and environmental safety of body and hair products or the semantics of running a green business. But, because Acorn has been so passionate and thorough about their message...it is reaching unlikely populations. They are leaders in their industry and their approach is already reaching not just their own employees but other local stylists on the Seacoast.

28. Is your building LEED certified? Have you considered LEED retrofitting? EPA energy challenge? Energy Star certification?

- 3) Yes, LEED's cert or retrofitted    2) Lesser programs, EPA/Energy star; some tangible changes    1) Informal assessment of building's energy use     0) No LEED, No retrofitting, No conservation efforts    N/A

Acorn is strapped in this area because they are renters. They did try to get the space evaluated by PSNH but have a reluctant landlord. Despite this, they have done all they can to make the space as energy efficient and conserving as possible – at their own expense.

29. If in Maine, are you participating in the Efficiency Maine Program? If in NH, have you contacted PSNH about their business efficiency programs?

- 3) Yes, Efficiency ME or PSNH program    1) Have contacted programs, researching     0) No    N/A

Acorn continues to push their landlord in order to get a full PSNH evaluation and to be able to take advantage of much-needed funding and know-how from the business program. Particularly with lighting, Acorn hopes to get support in moving to full-spectrum/LED lights.

## Waste:

30. Do you recycle? How extensively? Is it easy and automatic? Have you instituted/encouraged/educated employees/customers on recycling? (*America consumes 31.2 billion water bottles a year, using 17.6 million barrels of oil to create them.*)

- 3) Yes, extensive recycling for everything produced/sold, prominent display for customers     2) More than the status quo, some special effort    1) Minimal, fulfilling status quo    0) Don't recycle    N/A

Acorn not only has employees recycle but it also engages and reminds customers with little signs about recycling: how to and why and please do it at home! They recycle the usual; bottles, cans, office paper, newspapers and magazines. Acorn even recycles the cut hair, collecting it and sending it to [A Matter of Trust](#), a company which uses the cut hair to make super-absorbent mats that soak up the crude in large and small oil spills. Once a month the hair is shipped to [Matter of Trust](#) at Acorn's cost; making excellent use of a large waste product at the salon. A sign in the salon explains to patrons how their cut hair is used, engaging them to think about creative recycling and one of the down-sides of oil use, (spills). Acorn also encourages customers or community members to donate their plastic shopping bags for use in perms and coloring – those bags are washed and used over and over until they are threadbare. Plastic coloring and perming gloves are also washed and reused instead of being tossed after one use as they are at most salons. Acorn receives plastic shopping bags and turns them around for reuse for retail sales. Acorn does not subscribe to any magazines, instead offers a recycled/used magazine and book swap for customers. They also help women recycle unwanted handbags, with a special corner where people can take any handbag they want and leave any one they don't. All of the furniture at Acorn has been recycled instead of bought new. Even the little price tags on their retail items are reused – when a customer buys something they take of the price tag and save it for use on another item.

31. Have you done a waste audit? (*See the EPA's free WasteWise which analyzes a workplaces' municipal solid waste and helps you to monitor and reduce it!*)

- 3) Yes, official audit    1) Self-evaluation     0) Nothing done    N/A

Acorn was opened with the essential premise of executing sustainability throughout every aspect of the business: including waste reduction. As owners MacKay and Degan were planning the salon they self-evaluated how much waste a typical salon would generate and set up practices that would substantially reduce/recycle and handle waste. In their initial business plan, reducing the waste generated and recycling and reusing what couldn't be reduced was one way that they set themselves apart from other hair salons. By Acorn's own estimate, the salon creates less than half of the waste of a typical salon the same size.

32. If you use packaging or offer food, are there cloth/paper/cornstarch alternatives to any plastics you are using? Do you sell a product that is packaged? (*Five trillion plastic bags are manufactured each year. Americans throw away 100 billion bags a year – using 12 million barrels of oil in production - of those only 1% is recycled*)

- 3) All or almost all packaging renewable/sustainable/biodegradable      2) Some/a good portion renewable/etc X  
1) Minor alternatives integrated into packaging      0) Using typical plastics      N/A

Acorn does not buy plastic bags or for that matter, any kind of bag with their business name or logo: instead they use local donated/salvaged/reclaimed shopping bags. A sign in the salon reminds customers that Acorn receives used bags for reuse in coloring/perms and to package retail hair products. Degan says, "There are so many plastic bags out there, we couldn't in good conscious buy more. People have really taken an interest in this, we get all kinds of interesting bags from the neatest gift bags to really fancy plastic bags – and we give them another life here." Even the tags on retail products are reusable: each time something is purchased; the tag is removed and reused on another product. Acorn carries only the most organic, natural and safe hair and body products and is currently looking into asking these vendors if they offer their product in plastic alternative bottles, (corn, potato or sugar PLA plastics alternatives are now widely available and perform as well as plastic bottles and do not cost much more than petroleum-based plastics). The vegan and toxics-free nail polish line Acorn carries is packaged in recycled glass bottles with tops made from recycled rubber. Acorn provides customers with hot and cold drinks in washable mugs or glasses and does not use paper towels; opting for washable rags for cleaning and hand towels for customers.

33. Have you reduced your waste, (if started green consider industry norms)?

- 3) 50% reduction in waste X      2) Yes, substantially (approx. 20%)      1) Somewhat, slight reduction in waste  
0) Same as always      N/A

Both Degan and MacKay have worked for years in traditional salons and are aware of the usual amounts of waste generated within the industry. By their own calculations, Acorn has reduced their waste by more than half. "Most salons I worked at had about 2 garbage bags full of cut hair a day and that hair went right into the garbage. And its pretty typical to not recycle any of the shipping/packaging material that the product comes in – I remember a garbage can being filled every other day, with much of what could have been recycled," explains Degan. Acorn collects all the cut hair and sends it to A Matter of Trust where it is reused to make mats that absorb oil at spills around the world; at least a box of cut hair a week goes to A Matter of Trust. All of the shipping materials that product arrives in is recycled or reused. In fact one of the product lines, Sheer Miracles, comes packaged in zip-lock bags to protect against leakage – Acorn saves up those bags and returns them to Sheer for reuse, or they are saved for use in the community Locks of Love project. (Individuals grow their hair long and then Acorn donates their time to cut that hair professionally; sending it to Locks of Love where the hair is made into realistic wigs for children with cancer.) Acorn is currently trying to find a way to reuse/reduce the spent foil from coloring jobs and is researching possibilities like washing it and donating it to schools for craft projects. Degan adds, "My experience from other salons is that cut hair and paper towels tend to generate most of the waste so we feel pretty good about having eliminated both of those items from our waste stream." Rags replace paper for cleaning and hand towels in the bathroom have nearly eliminated garbage from the bathroom waste bin. There is little to no waste from plastic gloves and plastic coloring or perm caps because Acorn washes and reuses the gloves and washes and reuses donated plastic shopping bags instead of one-time use caps and gloves. Acorn took what could have been large furniture garbage out of the waste stream by furnishing the salon with used and discarded furniture instead of buying new.

34. Do you compost?

- 3) Yes, greater than 75% of compostable waste      2) Some      1) Minimal/No special effort      0) None      N/A X

Although Acorn does not have any product to compost...they are reusing the organic waste (cut hair) that the salon generates, by donating it to Matter of Trust for reuse as oil spill mats.

35. Do you receive goods extensively packaged? Is that packaging necessary and have you talked to suppliers about excessive or wasteful packaging?

- 3) Chooses suppliers that minimally package/encourages all suppliers to consider packaging X      2) has influenced a supplier or changed due to packaging      1) Considers packaging      0) No consideration N/A

All of Acorn's product suppliers are super green and so that is reflected in their packaging. Degan and MacKay understand just how much wasteful and excessive packaging traditional salons receive and so consciously set out to recycle all of their salon's packaging and choose suppliers that packaged responsibly. Having said that, Acorn reuses and/or donates much of the packaging materials that they receive to other businesses and even the local UPS. For example Sheer Miracles uses recycled zip-lock bags instead of packing peanuts and Acorn has talked with them about sending back the bags for reuse, (and they also reuse them themselves for Locks of Love hair packages). Acorn is now trying to bring local hair products into the salon and they would eliminate the use for packaging entirely.

36. Do you buy post consumer recycled paper? Do you recycle paper? Do you print your brochures/flyers/business materials on recycled paper? (*Staples currently offers printing on recycled paper for the same cost of virgin paper*)

- 3) Only uses recycled, recycling, conserving, printing (only if business materials on recycled)      2) Sometimes uses recycled, do recycle, do conserve X      1) Recycling paper, minimal conservation      0) No recycled/recycling      N/A

Acorn buys recycled office paper, recycles or reuses all paper items in the salon and office and at home. They did not choose recycled paper for business materials but later learned that the company they use, Vista Printing, actually has much of their printing done with Ram, which uses only recycled paper and has incredibly sustainable printing practices from soy-based inks to sustainably harvested/certified paper. Any business materials going forward will be printed with Ram with

recycled paper and sustainable inks. Acorn has a recycled hemp paper customer comment book centrally located that explains to customers what makes that paper choice sustainable.

37. Do you recycle printer/toner cartridges?

3) Yes  0) No  N/A

38. Do you use both sides of paper whenever possible? Print on both sides? Print black and white when possible? Do you reuse what you can in the office? Boxes, envelopes, etc...? Encourage conservation of products?

3) Strong conservation ethic  2) Some conservation  1) Minimal conservation  0) No Conservation  N/A

Acorn is super conservative with paper use, always printing on both sides, almost never using color printing unless absolutely necessary and reusing paper for scraps. "We almost never buy office supplies, choosing instead to rely on donated reused/recycled materials. There is so much out there from free pens to reusable envelopes. We didn't feel like we needed our own stationary or envelopes and we frankly don't even buy paper that often. We have a network of clients and friends that donate what they have to us and we donate other reusable items to them," says MacKay.

39. Do you donate furniture/equipment instead of throwing it out?

3) Yes, tangible examples  0) No  N/A

Not only does Acorn donate larger items instead of throwing them out, but they also outfitted the entire salon with used or discarded furniture and equipment. Even the large hair dryers were bought used and every item of furniture in the salon is used/salvaged. A sign explains to customers that the salon used recycled furniture and equipment in an effort to reduce its environmental impact. "There is a used beauty supply outlet in Hooksett that we frequent for larger items. It makes much more sense to get these things second-hand than buying them new...we couldn't afford to buy them new anyway!" says MacKay.

Before Acorn opened they needed to renovate the space and it was left furnished; instead of taking everything to the landfill, they opened their doors and offered it all up for free. "Nearly everything was taken out of here and reused and we didn't have to take it to the dump. It was a win/win for everyone," adds MacKay.

Acorn has a book, magazine and purse swap open to customers – clients donate any of these items used and then can take home something used but new to them.

#### Transportation/Travel:

40. Does your business involve transporting goods? Do you use fuel efficient vehicles? BioDiesel?

3) Yes, highly fuel efficient (hybrid/biodiesel)  2) Some effort, some changes (ext. circumstances)   
1) Very little effort  0) No, nothing  N/A

Acorn owner Allie Degan has a small fuel efficient Aero.

41. If you contract out your deliveries have you encouraged that company to use fuel efficient vehicles or biodiesel? Have you sought out local distributors?

3) Yes, integral part of choosing supplier & talks to supplier  1) Among considerations for choosing supplier  0) No considerations  N/A

Acorn has to balance the naturalness and safety of the products they use and sell with trying to get them as local as possible. Safe and sustainable ingredients are the top priority with product and that doesn't always allow them to buy local. But now that they have identified 3 professional lines that meet their stringent safety and green specifications: Acorn is looking for local producers of natural products. They are currently in talks with Seacoast beauty product makers Stolat and Lion's Tooth Organics.

When it comes to other beauty supplies for the salon, Acorn always tries to shop local instead of on-line, (which is very common in the beauty industry). They try to get most of their supplies from Sally's in Somersworth or CB Sullivan's in Newington; or search for items used on Ebay.

42. Is your business vehicle/personal car fuel efficient?

3) Yes, conscious decision  1) Somewhat (ext. circumstances)  0) No, no effort

Allie Degan drives a compact Aero.

43. Do you carpool whenever possible? Travel less, phone meetings whenever possible? Do you encourage employees to work at home if possible?

3) Yes, personal & employee system for less travel/working from home  2) Sometimes, when possible if feasible, some employee outreach  1) Not a priority but welcome  0) No employee outreach  N/A

All the salon employees need to be at the salon to do their job but owners MacKay and Degan always carpool for meetings or events outside of the salon.

44. Do you encourage employees to carpool or walk/bike to work? Do you have a bike rack for customers/employees? Incentives for workers who walk/bike/car pool?

3) Employees encouraged to walk/bike with incentives and tangible results  2) Employees encouraged but no incentives, mixed results  1) Some outreach, not a priority  0) No employee outreach  N/A

All of the employees live relatively rural and public transport or walking/biking/car pooling is not an option due to distance and varied locations.

45. Do you provide any incentives to employees to purchase more efficient vehicles? (for larger businesses or corporations)

3) Yes – any plan  0) No, nothing offered  N/A



46. Is there public transportation available for customers and employees? (*Coast/Wildcat buses, Downeaster train?*)

3) Location chosen for access to public transport 1) encourages/incentivizes public transport 0) Public transport available and viable but no encouragement or incentives N/A X

**Acorn is centrally located in Downtown Dover and there are a number of public transportation options: Wildcat, Coast and Amtrak, very close by. However public transport is still sporadic and not a real possibility for workers who live rurally and not on public transport routes. Acorn is hoping to offer a "walkers" discount to workers and residents who are right in the downtown area and would be encouraged to try Acorn with a small "local businesses" discount. They do get a lot of "walk in" traffic because they are right downtown.**

47. Do you off-set business travel with "green credits"? (*See Better World Club's "Travel Cool" program*) Do you use a hybrid or fuel efficient vehicle when renting? Do you look for green hotels when traveling?

3) Yes, all aspects of business travel with an eye on sustainability 2) Some of the above, some of the time  
1) Have begun to look into greening business travel 0) No N/A X

No business travel for Acorn, but if there was they would definitely choose fuel efficient vehicles and green hotels.

48. Do you have an anti-idling campaign at your facility?

3) Yes, campaign in place X 1) Will be instituting plan 0) No, nothing, not interested N/A

Acorn is the first Green Alliance Business Partner to post the GA's new "No Idling" flyers. Look for it in their window!

## Community:

49. Does your business give back or contribute to the community? **BONUS POINT**

3) Yes, extensively, tangible examples X 2) Some 1) Small amount 0) not much N/A

Community involvement and education is essential to Acorn's business model. They never stop educating the community on the importance of safe and natural ingredients in hair and body products and use a number of creative avenues to do so, including relentless discussions with every client that comes thru their door. Degan in particular is always willing to show any resident how to vet the ingredients on anything they have at home, sharing her time and knowledge about the safety of ingredients and what to look out for. There are many tangible community programs that Acorn contributes to. All of the cut hair is donated to A Matter of Trust at Acorn's shipping cost so that the company can make super-absorbent mats for oil spills. Acorn also participates in the Locks of Love program, cutting hair for free and then sending it to Locks of Love where it is made into wigs given to children with cancer. Acorn cuts hair for free all day at the Dover Apple Harvest Day for Locks of Love and also offers a much discounted haircut rate year round for anyone who would like to donate their long hair to Locks of Love. Those individuals get an adult haircut at a children's rate and Acorn delivers the hair to Locks of Love, any time of the year. Acorn also aggressively supports and promotes local businesses by featuring a "local business board" where any local business can post their flyers/business info/business cards. Acorn hosts an ongoing purse and book and magazine swap where anyone from the community can come in and swap a book, magazine or purse and get another. Acorn also participates in the Coheco Valley Humane Society Dog Walk where they raise money, walk dogs and donate all their profits on that day to the Society. Acorn hosts a donations container for the ASPCA at the salon and participates in the United Way Day of Caring. Acorn donates all of its employees for an entire day to the United Way's Day of Caring where they go into the community and work on a project of need. This Christmas Acorn has adopted a local family in need and will donate items and money for their Christmas needs as well as encourage clients to make a donation. Acorn participates in the Step Out For Diabetes Walk, with employees forming a team that walks and raises money for the American Diabetes Association. Acorn has lobbied the Dover Chamber of Commerce, educating its members and leadership on the importance of choosing green. They are currently offering a discount to all Town of Dover employees to thank them for their community service. **It is important to note that Acorn has been open half a year, in that short time they have already participated and contributed to an impressive number of community projects.**

50. Do you educate/advertise to the community/employees/customers on any of your sustainable business practices?

3) Education major part of business X 2) Some education 1) Minimal, just starting 0) None N/A

Acorn can not succeed as a green salon without education. They admit this is an uphill battle but not one that is impossible. "We know we are often starting from square one," says MacKay. "So many people have been using toxic products for so long, so many salons have never considered the environmental impact of their operations...that we need to explain and convince everyone why we are different and why it makes a difference." Education about the importance of safe hair and body products is priority number 1. Each customer that comes thru the door gets a full explanation on how the ingredients of the products used and sold at Acorn have been thoroughly vetted for safety and naturalness and Degan often takes it one step further, sharing the tools of this knowledge with individuals so they can start to look at the ingredients of other products they have at home. Signs are posted about ingredients and what to look out for and a binder at the salon is filled with research findings and articles about safe and unsafe ingredients and products. All the employees at Acorn are knowledgeable and invested in the sustainable practices of the salon and its products. Signs are posted all over the salon that explain the sustainable choices made for other items such as why no paper towels, zero VOC paint, recycled furniture and much more. Acorn has spoken on community radio about the importance of safe body and hair product ingredients and lobbied the Chamber of Commerce about why all businesses should go green. Acorn has volunteered at many community

events where they share their product ingredient knowledge and encourage folks to learn more about what they are putting on or in their bodies.

51. Do you talk to other businesses/vendors/suppliers about the importance of sustainable business practices?

3) Advocate to all other businesses and suppliers X 2) Some advocacy and outreach 1) Minimal, just starting to advocate/reach out 0) None

Acom's green crusading in the beauty industry is non-stop. They only choose product vendors that meet the high standards they have set for safety and naturalness and in that process have turned away many, many product lines because of unsafe ingredients – there have been many, many conversations with these companies and why Acom won't carry them. On a local level Acom is currently in talks with an area body products producer in hopes that they will produce a line of their natural products that will meet Acom's specifications; so they are tangibly influencing the kinds of ingredients being used. All of Acom's stylists consistently engage other area stylists and salons to consider the health of the products they use and the way that they are running their salons. "We are not just talking to other stylists. We are talking to every other business out there that we can reach. We tell them, "Do it now, green your business now because this is the way of the future, Why not do it first?" convinces MacKay. Acom has also tried to carry their message to the bottom levels of the beauty industry, always requesting items at the local wholesale beauty outlets that are more sustainable and natural. "I think where we have had an impact is in just asking for a full ingredient list – people are starting to get used to our requests for these lists. At first when we would ask they would say, what do you need that for? But now some are beginning to understand that it is a reasonable thing to request," says Degan. Degan points out that when they first contacted Pureology, (a national natural hair product line) that dealer was shocked that they had an issue with some of the ingredients in the product. "The fact that we were not willing to sell some of their items because of a particular ingredient, really floored them, but now that we have a working relationship with them they understand what we are looking for."

52. Are you a member of Seacoast Buy Local?

3) Yes 0) No X N/A

Acom is not currently a member but is very interested in joining soon.

53. Do you source from local vendors? Approx. what percentage of your product comes from local suppliers?

Have you begun to try to source more from local vendors? (*Studies show that dollars spent locally tend to stay local; local businesses contribute more to local non-profits and participate more in community life; and local independents demand less of our energy resources and public infrastructure).*

3) Yes, 50% or more 2) less than 50% 1) approx. 20% X 0) Not a consideration N/A

Because safety and naturalness of ingredients is the priority at Acom, sometimes that doesn't always sync up with being local. In regards to product, Acom first makes sure that the item meets their strict requirements and that means that they must choose from lines produced all over the country. Acom is currently looking to carry more locally produced products and is in talks with three local producers to get a product that will meet their standards (Jenness, Stolat, and Lion's Tooth).

"Right now we only found 3 lines that we feel are 100% safe and natural – we hope to match that with another 3 local lines," says MacKay. For other supplies, Acom always sources locally, choosing the closest Beauty Supply stores in Somersworth and Newington and making sure to buy local on all their other business needs.

54. Do you check to see if your suppliers are environmentally responsible?

3) Yes, always X 2) Sometimes, important to choice 1) Occasionally, when convenient 0) No, never N/A

Sustainability is something that is applied to everything that Acom purchases for and sells at the Salon. Sometimes the most sustainable choice is not to buy the product at all; like using shopping bags instead of purchasing plastic processing caps or washing and reusing processing gloves. Or like choosing not to offer the toxic hair relaxing process. All of the products they carry, from the natural hair dyes to the nail polishes have been vetted for sustainability, naturalness and safety. Acom is not afraid to lean on suppliers for more information on ingredients or to request items that they feel are safer and more sustainable. Locally they have begun quite a dialogue at both large beauty supply stores that have not been particularly interested in sustainability, (CB Sullivans and Sally's) – they've started the dialogue.

55. Do you encourage your staff to volunteer with local community projects/nonprofits?

3) Yes, large part of employee ethic X 2) Yes, encouraged 1) Suggested occasionally 0) No, never N/A

Matter of Trust – all cut hair donated for making oil spill mats

Locks of Love – free haircuts and collection and sending of hair to make wigs for children with cancer

Apple Harvest Day in Dover

Community handbag, book and magazine swap

Cochecho Valley Humane Society Dog Walk Team

ASPCA donation box

United Way Day of Caring

Adopt a family for Christmas

Step Out for Diabetes Walk

Discounts for Town Employees

Clearing house for information on the safety of hair and body products

**Please see question 49 for details on all these programs.**

## Miscellaneous:

56. Do you use chemicals on your business lawn/plantings: to wash clothes/linens, for cleaning?

3) No, all natural  2) Minimal chemicals used  1) Have made a few changes, but still use traditional chemicals in most areas  0) Traditional chemicals used in all of these areas  N/A

Acorn does not have a lawn, (street front location in downtown Dover), but the salon is cleaned using only 100% natural, organic and safe cleaning products, (mostly 7<sup>th</sup> Generation, Method or Shaklee). Acorn just purchased a used, efficient washer/dryer for their capes and towels and use only natural, non-toxic detergent on those items (Eco-wash)

57. Are there aspects of your business which are toxic/hazardous? If so how do you mitigate them? Have you investigated alternatives? What keeps you from offering/adopting safer products? **Bonus Point**

3) Completely non-toxic in a toxic industry  2) Make special effort to reduce impact or toxicity  1) Some effort, extenuating circumstances, not priority  0) No  N/A

Hair color is one of the most toxic products used on the human body – Acorn prides themselves on offering the least toxic hair color on the market. Using the cosmetic ingredient analysis site [www.skindeep.com](http://www.skindeep.com), as well as other research results, Acorn chose what they believe to be the safest organic color line available. In preparation for opening her salon, Acorn co-owner, Allison Degan became a self-educated expert on hair and body products. “There is a serious lack of regulation in the skincare/hair care products industry, particularly when it comes to hair color. At most salons and stores you never know what you are getting – unless you have spent a serious amount of time researching each ingredient and understanding what they do – you are really taking a chance on your body,” explains Allison. Acorn does not carry any dyes that contain P.P.D or para-phenolenediamine, which is an aromatic amine compound found in particularly high concentration in dark hair colors. P.P.D is used in textile and fur dyes and is not really regulated for use directly on humans. P.P.D can cause dermatitis and swelling of the face and scalp; indeed many women have allergic reactions so severe, they have gone into anaphylactic shock. Fragrance is another ingredient that Acorn watches closely. Fragrances are not regulated and manufacturers don’t have to disclose the ingredients in fragrance; for this reason, Acorn carries mainly unfragranced products. In choosing the products Acorn would carry, Degan researched every ingredient extensively and out of hundreds vetted, felt secure about only 2 product lines that met her high standards of purity and safety. The nail polish Acorn carries is vegan and free of DBP, a known carcinogen that leaks through the nails and into the body as well as being free of formaldehyde and toluene; toxins in most nail polishes that are hazardous to our community landfills. Acorn has a long list of harmful ingredients they will not allow in any items they use or sell; this list goes well beyond standard organic requirements and includes dangerous parabens among countless other common yet unsafe ingredients that are in most household and professional beauty products. When Acorn could not find an acceptable, safe way to “relax hair”, they decided they could not in good conscience offer that service and so if you are looking to have your hair relaxed, you won’t be able to get it done at Acorn. Acorn will not carry any products that contain dangerous parabens.

58. Do you provide healthy working conditions for employees? Fair wages/benefits?

3) Yes, employee health and wellness a priority  1) Fair conditions  0) Not a priority  N/A

Acorn’s employees enjoy particularly healthy working conditions for their industry. Because the hair dyes and perming agents are non-toxic and the most natural and safe available, Acorn’s stylists do not have to work with toxics like other stylists have to every day. Even the shampoos and conditioners, hair sprays and gels are natural and safe so for every service performed Acorn stylists enjoy a healthier environment than at traditional salons. And because Acorn used zero VOC paints and primers and safer poly urethanes as well as cork flooring that doesn’t off-gas, the general health of the salon is safer for customers and employees alike.

59. Does your business support and promote sustainability in innovative ways in the community?

3) Yes, trailblazer  2) Above average  1) Does the right thing, keeps a low profile  0) No leadership  N/A

Acorn uses every possible community angle to promote the sustainability of their salon and their products. From community radio talks, to informational signs posted around the salon, to educating about ingredients on their website; Acorn aggressively and effectively educates the public on why all hair salons and consumers should be making more sustainable choices.

60. Is your building naturally lighted? Does it have a healthy ambiance/open air for employees?

3) Yes, natural lighting, want to work there  1) Okay, not stellar  0) Drab, dark and depressing  N/A

The Acorn salon is very inviting; the sustainable renovations are palpable and the ambiance healthy for customers and employees alike.

## Further questions which will help us evaluate your business:

How many employees? **4 (2 of these four are owners MacKay and Degan)**

How big is your customer base? **400**

**What is the average distance employees drive to work?** 20 (each employee lives in a different direction from New Market to Lebanon to Rochester – Degan and MacKay hope to move closer to their business as soon as finances allow)

**Do you offer a product or service? How much of your income comes from the products vs. a service?** Acorn offers product and service with product accounting for about 20% and service about 80% of income.

**What is the average distance your product, or materials to make your product, travel?** Acorn currently carries 4 product lines, John Masters from NY, Shear Miracles from Penn., Pureology from CA. and Lion' Tooth from the Seacoast  
They purchase most of their other supplies from Sally's Beauty Supplies in Somersworth and CB Sullivans in Newington and always search locally for used larger items.

**Does your product require heat/electricity to produce? How much compared to the heat/electricity of just the building?** Acorn does not produce any of its own product on site and uses very little heat and electricity as the space is small and was renovated for efficiency and conservation.

**What are your heat/electric sources? Are any of them renewable? What is your water source? Water usage/month? How big of a building do you utilize? Is space being used efficiently?** The building is heated with propane and is on town water. The salon is less than 1,200 sq. ft. and that space is used very efficiently; a special vent on the heating system allows them to heat the space with very little propane. Despite the fact that they are running large dryers occasionally and small hair dryers often, Acorn has a very modest electric bill; aprox. \$70 per month.

**What is your biggest obstacle to offering more sustainable products or sustainable business practices?**

Acorn is most frustrated by being renters. They feel they could do much more were they owners of the salon space and building. For example, they have wanted to do a PSNH energy audit for some time now but the owner will not give his consent. Another obstacle is public perception that hair and the beauty industry doesn't need to be sustainable. "Often times, their hair salon is the last place that people think they need to apply sustainability," says MacKay. "While being green in other industries is beginning to catch on, in our industry its still pretty rare, so we have a lot of educating to do, to let the public understand why its important to make sure that your products are natural and your salon operating sustainably."

Indeed Degan usually has to back up to the very basics when talking to people about ingredients; there isn't an understanding of what goes into the products we put on our bodies; even if there is an ingredient list, most people don't know what any of the words on the label are or mean.

Competition is also an issue in the beauty industry -- there are so many salons, generally people will just chose the one that is most convenient for them at the time...instead of considering other factors like "Is this salon sustainable?" or "Does it offer safe products?"

