



SIMPLE WAYS to Boost Sustainability

GREENER

ENTERTAINMENT

By Brandon Willey

Bowling centers and family entertainment centers have a unique opportunity to reduce their environmental impact by adopting sustainable practices. From energy-efficient lighting and water-saving fixtures to eco-friendly materials and waste reduction programs, centers can implement various strategies to promote sustainability.

Incorporating digital solutions, encouraging reusable items, and sourcing locally are just some ways to minimize waste and resource consumption. I recently spoke with János Handó at Ladybird Farm Leisure Center, a leader in and outspoken supporter of sustainable entertainment, and we explored how bowling centers can highlight their commitment to eco-friendly and sustainable operations while enhancing the overall experience for visitors who value sustainability.

János sets the stage by telling us that a paradigm change is required. "The key question is: What kind of future would you like for your grandchildren? We must give up some part of our comfort level," János says.

As a tangible example, he says, "It is very easy to pick a plastic bottled beverage from a cooler and then dispose of the plastic bottle when it is consumed. But due to its chemical nature, plastic materials can only be reprocessed two to four times, and then they become real waste." One of the simple and innovative changes they have implemented is the removal of any plastic bottled drinks. Instead, they offer pure fruit juice drinks on tap served in paper cups or a guest's reusable bottle, which they sell as branded merchandise.

One effective, low-cost, and no-brainer strategy János mentions is, "**Switch to LED lighting**, replacing traditional bulbs with energy-efficient LEDs that consume less power and have a much longer lifespan." Additionally, they have installed **motion sensors** in areas like bathrooms, party rooms, hallways, and

storage spaces, ensuring that lights are only activated when necessary and reducing electricity usage.

Offering **digital tickets and waivers** and limiting the printing of receipts unless necessary are simple yet impactful ways to reduce paper consumption and reliance on printed materials. But this is just the tip of the sustainability iceberg according to János.

Collecting waste selectively should be a must-have feature of all location-based entertainment centers. Implementing **recycling programs** helps guests and staff properly separate materials such as landfill waste, paper, plastic, and aluminum to divert non-biodegradable waste from landfills.

Another valuable practice János mentions is **bulk purchasing** for as many items as possible from your suppliers. "By buying in larger quantities, not only can it save money, but centers can significantly reduce packaging waste, contributing to less environmental impact." He goes on to say, "It is also crucial to ensure that cleaning products used in the facility are environmentally safe. Switching to **non-toxic cleaning products** protects the environment and the health of guests and employees."

KEY AREAS FOR SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES:

- Energy Efficiency
- Water Conservation
- Digital Solutions
- Eco-Friendly Packaging

Competitive Strategies

ENGAGING GUESTS IN SUSTAINABILITY

Most importantly, János says **engaging with guests on sustainability** efforts is necessary to foster environmental awareness. János provides information about the center's eco-friendly practices through active and passive guest engagement. They have installed dozens of posters throughout the facility with explanations of renewable energy, waste routes, the ecological footprint, and conscious shopping. More actively, they provide STEM sessions for different age groups on each topic covered on the posters and have regular craft programs where children can create useful articles from waste.



significantly reduce water consumption without sacrificing functionality, helping to conserve such a valuable resource."

Another way to improve efficiency is through building automation systems. János clarifies, "When we build [additions], we use the concept of total cost of ownership. It might cost more in capital expenses, but there will be a nice return on investment with lower operating costs. These smart energy management systems control lighting, heating, and cooling based on occupancy and time of day, ensuring that energy is only used when necessary." This lowers electricity usage and reduces the center's overall carbon footprint.

Additionally, to encourage guests with electric cars to visit and to promote clean energy transportation, János suggests bowling centers install electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and provide bike-friendly facilities, such as bike racks and incentives for guests or staff who cycle to the center.

In food service areas, János implores us to transition to reusable items like cups, plates, and utensils as a critical step toward sustainability. By moving away from single-use plastics and other non-biodegradable items, operators can minimize waste and promote a more eco-conscious experience for guests. For example, János only provides straws for frozen drinks, and he says, "Using eco-friendly packaging made from biodegradable and recyclable materials for our food and beverages further reduces our environmental impact."

GO THE EXTRA MILE

While many of the preceding recommendations are easier and cost less to implement, the next few suggestions can take your commitment to sustainability to another level entirely. János says, "One of the most impactful approaches is to invest in renewable energy by installing solar panels or purchasing green energy from renewable sources. As of 2017, we secure all our electricity from renewable sources. Even our kitchen is fully electric and not reliant on natural gas."

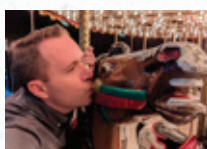
Another way to enhance sustainability is through composting programs for food waste generated from food service and concessions. János says, "By diverting organic waste from landfills and turning it into compost, centers can reduce environmental impact and contribute to healthier soil ecosystems. In Spring 2025, we will install a composting machine to compost all food, green, and used coffee waste."

Bowling centers can use sustainable building materials like recycled materials when undertaking construction or renovation projects. János says, "Installing green roofs or walls can provide benefits like improved insulation, reduced stormwater runoff, and cleaner air." Green certifications like LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) or Green Globe can "further validate the center's commitment to sustainability and provide a framework for implementing best practices in energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction."

As a responsible community partner, János believes supporting local economies and reducing transportation-related emissions are critical elements of sustainable operations. Even when it is not the cheapest, engage in local sourcing by purchasing food, beverages, and other materials from nearby suppliers, thereby reducing the carbon footprint. Finally, he recommends choosing sustainable suppliers that prioritize eco-friendly practices. Partnering with suppliers who offer organic, fair trade-certified, or environmentally responsible products can reinforce a center's dedication to ethical and sustainable business practices.

By implementing just a few of these practices, operators can reduce their environmental impact while providing guests with an engaging and enjoyable experience. János summarizes, "By analyzing our supply chain and operations, we can always find improvements that cause less damage to Mother Earth. Yes, it will sometimes go against the bottom line, but sustainability does not have to endanger overall profitability."

Paraphrasing Einstein, János concludes, "It is foolish to expect a different result if we do the same thing all the time." ●



Brandon Willey, ICAE, is co-founder of the LBX Collective and Premier LBX Group, co-host of The LBX Daily Show, and founder and CEO of Hownd. Brandon has an intense passion for the attractions industry and extensive knowledge of location-based entertainment. Brandon is the former chair of IAAPA's FEC Committee and now sits on the North American Manufacturers and Suppliers Committee. You can connect with him at [LinkedIn.com/in/bwilley](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bwilley).