

Can Corporate Housing Go Green?

By Chris Murphy – Director of Sales



Let's Start with Some Fast Math.

Human activity generated about **36.8 billion tonnes** (metric tons) of greenhouse gas emissions in 2022. (An increase vs. 2021 due to the comeback effect of post-COVID-19 economies globally.)

Business travel accounts for **about 2.5% of the overall number**, and non-air-travel activities (auto emissions, food/beverage, and accommodations) account for **less than 10%** of business travel emissions overall.

Even as we continue to round down the carbon impact of business travel accommodations to an estimated 1% of the total percentage, it is still astonishing - **at nearly 40 million tonnes in total**.

By any measure, if companies want to take positive steps to lower carbon emissions and slow climate change (per the [KPMG Survey of Sustainability Reporting](#), 96% of the world's largest companies are publicly committed to doing so), they need to adopt sustainability policies and practices in their global travel strategies.

A review of accommodations options can be a good place to start.

Going Green with Corporate Housing

Multiple tools and resources exist for calculating the carbon cost of hotel stays, such as the research available from the [Cornell University Hotel Sustainability Index](#) and the [Sustainable Hospitality Alliance](#). In general, the more amenities a hotel provides, the higher the carbon cost; the carbon footprint in a full-service hotel will include not only the emissions associated with the room but also with the swimming pool, food service, meeting rooms, and more. A stay in accommodations with lower energy demands will, by definition, result in a lower carbon footprint for the traveler, and often a lower price point as well.

In early 2022, the [Corporate Housing Providers Association](#) (CHPA) launched a Workgroup on Sustainability for its 300+ members representing thousands of properties and units. The accommodations managed by CHPA members represent alternative solutions on many levels for business travelers. They are typically larger than an average hotel room, more private (with fewer public and high-traffic areas), and include kitchens for preparing daily meals.

As a result, in choosing an alternative accommodation for comfort and spaciousness, the traveler is also leaving a smaller carbon footprint during their stay.

Stays in alternative accommodations are a better sustainability choice than in most hotels.

CHPA is aligned with the [Coalition for Greener Mobility](#), representing several major trade associations whose members deliver services to relocating employees and business travelers. This coalition is working towards establishing globally accepted metrics and standardized data points such as the average carbon cost of a stay in furnished housing. With this knowledge, corporate travel buyers and global mobility managers will have hard data to compare what is already anecdotally evident: *stays in alternative accommodations are a better sustainability choice than in most hotels.*

People, Planet and Profit: The Alternative Accommodations Approach to Sustainability

The CHPA Workgroup on Sustainability supports members with education, advocacy, and resources. Alternative accommodations operators range from local property owners with a concentrated inventory and expertise in a single market to global property management firms with hundreds of units around the world. CHPA, as well as global housing solutions providers like Dwellworks Living, are guiding these operators so that they understand the ‘people, planet and profit’ value propositions that are core to sustainability. This also allows for programs that can be measured through standardized emissions analysis software and reported to clients to track greenhouse gas emissions.

Dwellworks Living, for example, manages a global corporate housing supply chain of 3,500 operators, in 125+ countries, encompassing over 100,000 alternative accommodations units. We survey our top volume suppliers annually to gauge adoption rates of sustainable practices. In our January 2023 survey, published in our [2022-2023 ESG Impact Report](#), 84% of responding partners indicated they were taking positive action on sustainability, as shown in the below graph.

Percentage of Corporate Housing Supplier	Sustainable Action
82%	Have recycle and re-use programs
56%	Use energy efficient lighting and water-saving practices
52%	Have awareness and education programs for their employees and guests
48%	Have food waste reduction programs in place
47%	Source for sustainable furnishings and products in their properties
36%	Have installed lower energy use appliances
32%	Have made additional modifications for accessibility (beyond ADA minimums)
27%	Have a formal strategy in their properties for sustainable actions and tracking
26%	Engage with sustainability industry experts, government resources, consultants
23%	Have transportation services that use alternative energy
16%	Reported not yet having sustainability initiatives

A corporate housing supply chain is ‘alternative’ by design to meet the expectations of extended-stay customers. As a result, each operator is independently responsible for their performance but understands that as they progress on the sustainability journey, we are moving towards establishing KPIs for sustainable performance, similar to long-established expectations for responsiveness, service quality, and cost competitiveness. Ultimately, this performance will become part of the ‘match score’ we provide to clients to align their recommended accommodations options with the full array of their selection criteria.

Selecting Sustainable Suppliers

Business travel and global mobility managers are championing their organizations' overall sustainability strategies, which increasingly now include new DEI guidelines and benefits for who travels or participates in a relocation on behalf of the business. In the early stages of a post-pandemic world, where corporations are addressing multiple other macro-economic, workforce, and even political influences, business travel is trending to fewer trips but longer stays, and fewer traditional 'expat assignments' and more extended business travel and project-based assignments. In this travel/mobility environment, with potentially greater numbers of employees on the move, but in a wider array of cost models, companies will have an increased need for alternative accommodations solutions that also appeal to a more diverse population.

All requests for proposals (RFPs) now include questions about a provider's commitment to sustainability. While not every accommodations provider, whether a hotel or a corporate apartment operator, is yet able to report on greenhouse gas emissions at the property or unit level, all suppliers can provide an update of their sustainably supportive actions and investments.

We've listed below some of the common expectations and proof points of sustainability and the questions we are asking partners as they complete their property profiles to be searched and sourced across our database.



Energy Efficiency and Conservation: Does the property include using energy-efficient lighting, smart thermostats, and optimized HVAC systems?



Renewable and Alternative Energy: Does the property use solar panels or energy from wind turbines? Does the property have access to energy credits for alternative power sourcing?



Waste Reduction and Recycling: Does the property have a zero-single-use plastic policy? Is landfill waste minimized and recycling maximized?



Water Conservation: Do the units include low-flow faucets and toilets? What are the water conservation methods used for landscaping and gardening?



Sustainable Sourcing and Local Procurement: Are toiletries, furniture, and furnishings sustainably sourced and within a circular economy for reuse or repurposing?



Green Building Design: Where applicable, do property construction and renovations incorporate sustainable design principles, eco-friendly building materials, optimized insulation and ventilation, and use of natural lighting and energy-efficient systems?



Staff and Guest Engagement: Communication is at the heart of successful sustainability. Are guests encouraged to save water and energy, but also educated about local sourcing, eco-friendly grocery stores, farmers' markets and restaurants, and efficient commuting and transportation options? Do the local operators share other informed insights that invite guests to buy into the sustainability experience? Are staff trained in eco-friendly practices and incentivizing sustainable behaviors?



Collaboration and Industry Initiatives: Does the property operator actively engage in industry partnerships, associations, and initiatives to address climate change collectively?



Reporting and Certification: Is the property tracking its carbon footprint? Are they working with certifying bodies to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices and earn independent validation?

Join the Industry-Leading Approach to Sustainability with Dwellworks Living

Dwellworks committed to a formal ESG initiative in 2021. We responded to the growing expectation among our stakeholders, including clients, guests, associates, network partners, investors, and our local communities, for tangible actions and results in the areas of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) impact.

Over the past 2+ years, stakeholder ESG expectations have broadened and deepened in scope and requirements. We are increasingly focused on working within the global mobility and business travel industries to establish standards of measurement and evaluation. Adoption of standards will enable the stakeholder ecosystem to focus on governance, key controllables, and performance, versus debating the standards themselves.

Our Dwellworks Living promise is to provide objective, high-performing, client-matched housing solutions in over 125 countries. Clients increasingly expect to be presented with sustainable options, and suppliers in our corporate housing supply chain are acting in response.

CHPA Sustainability Workgroup co-chair [Debbie Woodley](#) is also VP, Global Supply Chain at Dwellworks Living. She comments, "We value our partners and are helping them build their sustainable strategies, towards the ultimate goal of earning industry-recognized sustainability certification, which will be key to earning ongoing bookings."

For more information download our 2022-2023 ESG Impact Report [here](#). To read more about our approach to sustainability, read our latest Dwellworks Living [blog](#).



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