

Sustainability Spotlight:

Brice Maren

Maintenance Worker, East Side Recycling Center Division



What does sustainability mean to you, and why do you believe it's important?

To me, sustainability means taking responsibility for how your everyday activities impact the resources and environment for current and future generations. Being in Iowa, I feel certain aspects of sustainability related to water issues carry the most importance. The impact of our activities on our rivers and lakes affects all Iowans on a local as well as regional basis. Floods, municipal water quality, recreational opportunities...this would just be part of the list.

How is sustainability incorporated into your position?

The East Side Recycling Center was developed to expand the opportunities for Iowa City residents to make sustainable choices, so this is reflected in much of the work of my position. While going about routine maintenance of the grounds, I help to educate the public about some of the nuances of our recycling program, because here you can recycle anything from engine oil to furniture, if you know where to go. The maintenance of our network of biocells and rain gardens (native plants!) keep things busy most of the year.

What actions have you taken to improve sustainability within your position?

Along with much help from other City staff and volunteers, I have assisted in engineering three rain gardens that capture storm water from our roof tops and have also transformed a bare slope of about 2,500 sq. ft. into native grasses and forbs. We have planted these areas and our biocells with several species of native milkweeds and are looking forward to participating in the City's upcoming monarch butterfly events.

In your opinion, what efforts can be made to improve sustainability within our community?

To beat the drum a little bit more, we need to see continued progress from our governments to make resources available that will help municipal communities and farmers deal with water quality issues on a comprehensive scale. The floods of 2008 are proof of the cost of letting things go on as they are. I like to think that the pragmatic efforts that Iowa City has made on our site and others like it helps to build the momentum toward finding solutions on a broader scale.

For more information about the City of Iowa City's sustainability efforts, visit www.icgov.org/sustainability, subscribe to our Sustainable Iowa City newsletter at www.icgov.org/e-subscriptions, or follow #SustainableIC on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

