

Sustainability Spotlight:

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What does sustainability mean to you?

Sustainability to me is being a good steward of the planet. It is awareness of what you're doing, how you're doing it, and what impacts your actions have on the environment and society. The idea is to maintain and even improve the planet for future generations.

How is sustainability incorporated into your position?

The Streets Division is definitely starting to look at things from a sustainability standpoint. Implementing some of these sustainable practices takes effort and resources, so in some ways I feel the division is behind due to limitations on

resources. However, we will catch up and I do know of several projects where the division is moving in a positive direction. For example, we use a salt/sand mix for winter maintenance. Studies show that the salt, and even the sand, are affecting water quality. As a result, we are working toward a reduction in the City's salt and sand usage. We would like to use something called an AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location) system on the plow trucks, which would track where the vehicles have been, as well as where and how much material is being placed on the roads. This system would allow us to look at different areas of the City and determine where we can reduce the amount of material used. We are also looking at using salt brine to pre-treat the roads during the winter months. Both systems would allow us to reduce the amount of salt and sand used, which we believe will have a positive impact on reducing the amount of resources used and improving water quality.

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

One of the ways we're improving sustainability is by changing equipment and where it's stored. Certain street sweepers do a better job of getting the larger materials off the roadway but not necessarily the finer materials. It has been found that the fine materials will wash into waterways and pollute as much or more than the larger materials. As a result, we are considering the use of a mixed fleet of street sweepers that would allow us to collect both large and fine materials. A mixed fleet has the potential to improve both water and air quality. In addition, we are currently in the process of completing a public works facility master plan. The City currently leases the Johnson County fairground buildings in the winter to provide heated storage for the City's plow trucks and other equipment. The problem with the arrangement is that there is no insulation in the building housing the plow trucks, so much of the heat is lost. Upgrading and constructing the City's own facilities to have proper insulation and advanced heating and ventilation systems are other ways I feel the Streets Division can be more sustainable.

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

Improving sustainability within my position and the community is about being aware of the decisions we make and their long-term impact on the community and the environment. For example, if a street is improved, how is the repair made? Is it a quick fix, or are we finding a more sustainable solution to the problem?

