

Sustainability Spotlight:

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What does sustainability mean to you?

Sustainability means looking at every project in a very holistic manner. For example, we look at the distance materials have to travel, or if the carpets we are using are recyclable, and whether the paints we use are low VOC. Every component is carefully selected so we are being sustainable. Additionally, we look at what products provide the best value for each project, what will give us the greatest longevity, and what will give us the best energy savings.



How is sustainability incorporated into your position?

In terms of the facilities we work on, I try to help staff think about things as they relate to our needs long-term. For example, before we started the fire station project, we took a tour of different facilities so they could see what existed in the newer facilities in the state and in our region. This helps us keep an eye on the future in the decisions we have to make. We may have done certain things in a certain way for a long period of time because of the building we had, and it's the way we had always done it. But is that the most efficient way now? Is there a way we can construct a building that is better for the public, easier to maintain, and that provides a better work environment? My role is to have staff think about those choices and facilitate those needs.

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

I am in a lucky generation in that regard, because there are so many products and so much information becoming available now. What I bring to the table is the ability to help evaluate what makes sense logistically for our projects. You never have the budget to do everything you want to do, so you have to figure out what can provide the biggest bang for our buck, what will give us the best life-cycle costs, what things make sense now, and pay it up front so we get those long-term savings. An example of that is when we were working on the Animal Shelter. Our budget was tight for the new facility, but we knew from the beginning that there was high energy use from the water used in those facilities, so one of the things we pushed for was a geothermal system. In my previous position as Architecture Services and Energy Coordinator, LEED certification was an important consideration. Fire Stations 2 and 4 were certified as LEED Gold by the United States Green Building Council, and the Education Center at the East Side Recycling Center was certified Platinum, which is the highest rating a facility can receive.

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

I would like to see people take advantage of what's available. There are numerous rebates available within Mid-America. I would like for people to know those rebates exist and to utilize them. I also think continued education is important. Some members of the public continue to have these old notions about LED lights, which really isn't the case anymore. I think we just need to have more education about those types of products and what we can do as individuals to improve our efforts toward sustainability.

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.

