

Spotlight on New Sustainability Manager for City of Colorado Springs

Interview by Linda Kogan with Ryan Trujillo

Linda Kogan, UCCS Director of Sustainability: What is your specific title?

Ryan Trujillo, City of COS Contract Compliance & Sustainability Manager: My current title is Contract Compliance & Sustainability Manager

LK: How long have you worked for the City and when did sustainability get added to your title? How was that decision made?

RT: The decision to have a sustainability focus in the City of Colorado Springs was made by Mayor Suthers shortly after his inauguration in June 2015. Mayor Suthers, and his executive team, see the benefits of implementing sustainability initiatives that not only save taxpayer dollars, but positively impact the environment. With competing priorities within City operations, it was not possible to hire a new sustainability position, although, I had been looking into our utility consumption and spend since I started with the City in February 2014, and have a background in sustainability efforts in the private sector. I was willing to take on the new challenge of reviving the City sustainability program, and believe that I'm a good fit based on my experience and current role in the City. The "contract compliance" portion of my job is for the management of fleet maintenance, facilities maintenance, office services, waste services, and other support services that could have a direct impact on sustainability efforts. Sustainability was officially added to my title in October 2015 through the 2016 budget process, and I am thrilled to be in this role at the City!

LK: What are some of your goals for your office?

RT: My main goal is to develop a successful sustainability program by learning from past sustainability initiatives, building on the successes of regional efforts, implementing best practices and having a measurable impact on our soon to be developed sustainability goals.

LK: What has been the most satisfying part of your work thus far?

RT: The best part about being in the public sector is that you can have a positive impact for the greater good of the community. This is especially true when it comes to sustainability. The very core of sustainability is to directly impact the environment, the economy, and the quality of life within a community. It is an honor to be driving these efforts within the City of Colorado Springs.

LK: How is Mayor Suthers communicating support for sustainability to you?

RT: Mayor Suthers is communicating his support in multiple ways. From signing the Peak Alliance Statement of Commitment, to highlighting the City's efforts to take the lead as a sustainable city, it is apparent that Mayor Suthers is in full support of sustainability.

LK: How are you interacting with the Peak Alliance for a Sustainable Future and the regional sustainability plan? Green Cities Coalition?

RT: Once "sustainability" was officially added to my title and I read the Pikes Peak 2030 Plan, I was focused on regional collaboration in these efforts. I began participating in the Peak Alliance for a Sustainable Future's monthly Sustainability in Progress (SIP), and have attended every

month since October. It is great to learn from others in the Pikes Peak region on various sustainability efforts and topics. I am also working with the Green Cities Coalition and Pikes Peak Environmental Forum on collaborative efforts. Lastly, I've asked representatives from our key regional partners to participate in the City's Sustainability Team. I believe that the cross-departmental and regional team will be able to gain a lot of momentum and drive the initiatives to success!

LK: What are you most excited about with regard to sustainability in Colorado Springs?

RT: I am very excited that the City of Colorado Springs has the potential to be a regional leader and national contender when it comes to sustainability. The regional collaboration and support for sustainability is amazing and there is a lot of momentum in the Pikes Peak Region.

LK: What do you feel will be your biggest challenge?

RT: The initial challenge that we face is determining what we want sustainability to look and feel like in the City of Colorado Springs. This will be done by the City Sustainability Team, which includes representatives from all City departments and a few key stakeholders, in conjunction with the community at large. A clear strategy and roadmap will be crucial in the success of the program.

LK: How can students support or get involved with your office?

RT: The simplest thing that students can do is get involved in local politics and issues. Understanding the unique challenges of our community is important in understanding how sustainability plays a role. There will be opportunities to become actively involved in the City's sustainability office by participating in community surveys & discussions, possible internship opportunities, participation in the focus area working groups, or other volunteer opportunities.