

City Sustainability Manager

Proposal for the Oshkosh Sustainability Advisory Board



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Executive Summary

This proposal to the City of Oshkosh addresses the importance of prioritizing sustainability at the city level. Currently Oshkosh doesn't have a department, team or person who can fully invest their time into advancing the city towards its goals laid out in the Sustainability Plan or track and monitor progress. In this document has laid out important stakeholders we've talked to, cities that have sustainability managers or similar positions and teams that Oshkosh can look to when considering or implementing this proposal. Hiring a sustainability manager will help Oshkosh maintain and report progress on it's goals, secure funding for projects, improve the cities green infrastructure, educate community members and staff, bridge different departments and keep them in communication and reach out and research other cities to learn how Oshkosh can be more sustainable. There are some barriers to overcome, such as costs and funding, if Oshkosh wants to implement this position. However, future benefits and cost savings that can be achieved will outweigh that. More information on the costs and barriers can be found in those respective sections.

This paper will also include background information on what a sustainability manager does, which includes researching and applying for grants. Our recommended actions are also included, which is to create a sustainability manager position, and hire a candidate for the role. Alternatively, there is the suggestion that the city direct staff to dedicate working time to sustainability focused projects, and to take into consideration impact on the environment when making decisions for the city, be it purchasing products or maintaining the park system.

Background

The City of Oshkosh has a Sustainability Plan, which outlines the city's goals for sustainable development. There is also a Sustainability Advisory Board, which can advise or recommend action to the city manager or city council. However, the Sustainability Advisory Board can only do just that, and have no actual voting power when it comes to policy making. While there are some members who serve on both the Sustainability Advisory Board and city council, the majority of the board is citizen volunteers. Brandon Nielsen, the staff liaison of the Sustainability Advisory Board, can only dedicate 4 hours a week, or 10% of working hours, to sustainability focused work.

The climate crisis will affect Oshkosh and all of Wisconsin, and the city must dedicate resources in order to take action on this crisis. 10 % of one employee's time and an advisory board of volunteers will not be enough to mitigate Oshkosh's impact on the climate crisis, nor be able to adequately prepare the city for the effects of climate change, no matter how capable they are.

Many Wisconsin cities, as well as similar sized communities across the country, have hired a sustainability manager or coordinator. Someone in this position advises city council members on projects and policy, develops policy, researches and applies for grants, and does various other sustainability focused tasks.

Public perception of a new hire can vary. In conversations with Oshkosh community members, opinions ranged from very positive with no concerns, to extremely negative opinions with concerns about cost and bureaucracy. It is important to take into account citizen's views, but steps should also be taken to protect their homes and neighborhoods from the climate crisis, no matter their view on the issue.

Recommended Action

What We Recommend:

We recommend that the City of Oshkosh create a full time sustainability manager position. In our research, we have found that having a dedicated employee to focus on achieving the city's sustainability goals is the most effective route. We recommend following the City of Racine's template for the role that a sustainability manager should play. There should be emphasis on researching and applying for grants that are applicable to the City of Oshkosh. The sustainability manager should also be responsible for training other city employees on sustainable issues. We also recommend that this position initiate projects within the city, and serve as a bridge between the community and the city government. The sustainability manager will present to city and county boards about areas the city could take action. Finally, this role will represent the City of Oshkosh at external meetings, in order to promote the actions the city has taken under their direction.

We recommend creating this role despite the financial commitment the city would have to take in order to create this position. The progress this position will make in pushing Oshkosh to be a more sustainable city is well worth the cost. Additionally, grant funding via this position can help ease the financial burden on the city. Costs will be further discussed in the "Cost" section of this report.

Alternative Recommendations

While we strongly recommend that the city create a position, there are alternatives that can increase Oshkosh's commitment to sustainability. This alternative would be to direct all employees to take sustainability into consideration when making decisions for the city. This can be done via environmental impact reports, or educating employees on what sustainable choices look like.

Additionally, we recommend that city staff have working hours that are dedicated to pursuing sustainability. This should be done by allocating more time for sustainability for staff members that already have experience in sustainability related fields, such as parks and forestry. These staff members should have regular meetings in order to discuss plans to make Oshkosh more sustainable.

Stakeholders

Misty McPhee, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies, UW Oshkosh

Misty McPhee is a resident of Oshkosh and is a professor at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Our group contacted McPhee because she is a valuable resource. McPhee is a secondary stakeholder because she is a resident of Oshkosh, and a sustainability manager could adjust city laws that could impact McPhee and her home. McPhee is also an expert because at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, she teaches in the Environmental Studies program and has lots of knowledge on sustainability. Because of this, McPhee was able to give our group two perspectives on the idea of a sustainability manager. McPhee started off saying the importance of sustainability and how humans are in a global crisis. Humans are currently living in an age of extinction that has rates faster than ever before. Humans may not think that this is impacting us but there are unknown implications to losing large amounts of organisms. An example that many do not realize is that bee populations are in danger as Earth warms. Without bees, the amount of pollination is going to decrease dramatically leaving less food for the organism on Earth.

As a homeowner, McPhee understands the potential impact of a sustainability manager. McPhee built her house to be a carbon net zero home and had to work closely with the city that was not happy with her ideas that often challenged the city's codes. A sustainability manager has the potential to ask these questions and research the different ways that current homes can become more sustainable and how new construction can implement these ideas right from the groundbreaking. They also can advocate to the citizens of Oshkosh on the importance of being environmentally sustainable and how the city can support those actions. Advocacy was an emphasis that McPhee touched on several times in our interview with her and this was a topic that was mentioned several times during other interviews. McPhee said "I don't know how to get through to those who make the decisions" when it comes to increasing the sustainability of Oshkosh. There is going to be a price for hiring a sustainability manager just like any other position; that will be covered more in the cost section. The difference is that a sustainability manager is going to be able to save the city more money in the long run than most of the other positions and that will be addressed more in the cost sections of this report. McPhee has been a great piece to our project and she understands the goals saying that "We are all in this together!"

Megen Hines, Environmental Program Coordinator, Menomonie, WI

Megen Hines is the Environmental Program Coordinator with Menomonie, Wisconsin. Her extensive background in sustainable practices and her experiences in her current role make her an expert on this topic. Hines dove in about the importance of sustainability at the start of the interview. One of the things she mentioned was the idea that there needs to be preparation for the long-term goals of sustainability. She says humans must be “proactive and not reactive” and this stuck out from other interviews. The earth is always changing and no place on Earth is changing the same. Humans need to be prepared for the upcoming future that is being brought upon by climate change because of the environmental change that it is bringing. By adjusting their municipalities to be more up to date and better for the environment, people can help preserve what they have but also prepare themselves for the future. Since Hines is already a part of a city staff, she had a great example of how a position like hers can bring profit back to the city. Menomonie had one solid waste compactor but the costs to transport it was impacting the benefits of it. Megen mentioned how she helped get a second compactor built for \$26,000. This was a large amount of money for a city the size of Menomonie, but the citizens took such a liking to the new compactor set up and used it so much that with the money being saved from the decrease in time transporting the waste and costs for use, that the city is going to have a return in investment in less than two years. This is a great example of how an employee that required costs to establish is generating large amounts of income for the city. Megen believes that the most important part of her position is the education that she can provide for the citizens of Menomonie. Education is a great way to get people to care about being sustainable and get them on board with the processes that are required for becoming more sustainable. Megen currently gets her salary provided for by portions of the utility department. Hines believes that a sustainability manager and like positions are great for cities over the population of 16,000. Being able to have someone who can devote their time, or at least most of their time, to sustainability is going to be more beneficial to larger communities that would draw more attention from those providing grants. Hines is going to provide not only great expertise, but she and the city of Menomonie are a great benchmarking example of the success that a sustainability manager can have and they will be covered again in that section.

Brandon Nielsen, Assistant Planner

Brandon Nielsen is Oshkosh’s assistant planner and although he wants Oshkosh to be more sustainable he can only do so much devoting 4 hours per week towards making Oshkosh more sustainable. He is a key stakeholder for our proposal because

he is a member of the Sustainability Advisory Board. Brandon told me a little bit about some of the barriers he thinks would arise, preventing Oshkosh from being able to create and fill this position. The number one hurdle would be coming up with the funding to pay a salary but another issue would be the city's overall will to become more sustainable. If community members want to be more sustainable then they might be more willing to have an increase to taxes and city government could restructure budgets to advance sustainability. He told me that a sustainability manager could help Oshkosh stay on track towards goals laid out in the sustainability plan. He also told me that creating a "green team" of individuals already working for the city government could be a good alternative and function similar to the sustainability manager. Overall he is interested in this proposal and supports hiring a sustainability manager at a basic level if funding can be secured.

Lori Palmeri, Mayor of Oshkosh

Lori Palmeri is Oshkosh's mayor and another key stakeholder in our proposal. As mayor she has knowledge of how city government functions from the top down so her information was really important. She told me that she'd like to see Oshkosh work on it's green infrastructure and social sustainability. Some of the things she told me that a sustainability manager should work on in Oshkosh include getting the city's green infrastructure to be closer or equal to the blue and gray infrastructure. She also told me that she wants Oshkosh to turn some of its unused and mowed green space into walkable and/or edible forests as well as researching the viability of autonomous mowing/street sweeping. She also reiterated that funding is a huge barrier to this proposal because a \$50,000 salary is really at least \$80,000 when you factor in benefits but also said Oshkosh would probably need a culture/ generational shift in opinions on sustainability. She told me how even after the city started No Mow May the city received many complaints and many people weren't aware of the initiative. Some of the benefits that hiring a sustainability manager would lead to include educating and informing the community on Oshkosh's sustainability projects, working with other community members, advocating for more park space and green infrastructure. Mayor Palmeri also told me that she'd like to see a sustainability manager track and report progress and potential projects to her so she can stay up to date on progress towards the city's sustainability goals. Overall she is interested in the idea of a sustainability manager but would like to see a non-profit organization provide similar services to the city before real dollars are committed to a long term position.

Patricia Hallquist, Sustainability Advisory Board

Patricia Hallquist is a citizen of Oshkosh, co-leader of the Oshkosh chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby, and a member of the Oshkosh Sustainability Advisory Board. Hallquist can be considered a primary stakeholder. In our conversation, Hallquist was asked a variety of questions. The most simple of these was, "Do you support the hiring of a sustainability manager?". The response was a yes. When asked about what projects she would like to see a sustainability manager take on, Hallquist responded with a list of items that she thought was attainable through the work of just one person. Some examples of these included: grant writing for sustainable energy projects, improving energy efficiency in city owned buildings, promoting renewable energy on city owned property, and a review of city code to remove any items that may prevent citizens from pursuing sustainable home improvements.

Austin Hammond, Menasha Common Council

Austin Hammond is a UWO alumni and city council member in Menasha, Wisconsin, as well as a Council member for Brothertown Indian Nation, and a member of the sustainability board in Menasha. Hammond is an expert stakeholder, as he does not currently reside in Oshkosh. Hammond noted that he would like to see a sustainability manager hired in both Oshkosh and Menasha. A sustainability manager, according to Hammond, would help him in his role as a city councilman by providing updates via presentations to the city council about sustainability efforts in the city. Additionally, Hammond would like this position created in order to have a staff member that he or other city council members could bring ideas to. He did note that cost would be an issue in both communities.

Aaron Wojciechowski, Oshkosh Common Council Member

Aaron Wojciechowski is a city councilman in the city of Oshkosh, a member of the Sustainability Advisory Board, and candidate for Wisconsin State Assembly. Wojciechowski is considered a key stakeholder. Wojciechowski is supportive of creating this position. He noted that he would like to see someone in this position integrate sustainable infrastructure and technology into the city. Wojciechowski said that he would support this position because the person filling the role could provide valuable expertise when it came time to vote on sustainability issues. Wojciechowski was concerned about costs, as well as public opinion.

Murphy Osmond, Local Business Manager

Murphy Osmond is an Oshkosh resident and manager of one of the locations of Planet Perk, a locally owned coffee shop. Osmond was also supportive of hiring a sustainability manager. The reason given for being supportive of this hire was related to his role and experience as a small business manager. Osmond pointed out that Planet Perk does its best to be a sustainable business. Cups and straws made from recycled materials and a very large variety of plant based products were a few highlights that Osmond pointed out. However, they are not doing all they can, due to cost. Osmond cited rising costs as a reason Planet Perk had to cease participating in a compost program. Supply chain issues have also pushed the costs of sustainability produced goods higher, and the business was weighing the pros and cons of continuing to purchase these. Osmond hoped that a sustainability manager could apply for grants that could help small businesses such as Planet Perk. If this were not possible, Osmond hoped that a sustainability manager could influence the city to subsidize small businesses that made environmentally friendly decisions.

Oshkosh Residents

In order to get the opinion and viewpoint of citizens of Oshkosh, the question "Would you support the hiring of a sustainability manager?" was posed on an online forum that is available to Oshkosh residents only, known as Nextdoor. Information about what a sustainability manager does, as well as a full job description was provided to give those commenting context. (See Appendix A). The majority of respondents expressed concerns similar to other stakeholders, which was concerns about cost. For example, Matt Laurtich, an Oshkosh area citizen, noted that he would only be in support of the position if it were proven that a sustainability manager could improve quality of life and bring in grants to add value to the city, and offset the cost of the position. Other residents were totally against the position, citing added bureaucracy and concerns about rising taxes. Finally, some residents were totally in support of the position. For example, Cindy Harnish, resident since 1987, was in support. Harnish noted climate change concerns, and thought that the city was not doing enough to address the climate crisis. She said that hiring a sustainability manager was an opportunity to take responsibility on a local level. Harnish has lived in Oshkosh since 1987, and spoke about how although it may mean raised taxes, quality of life improvements attract growth, and lead to a more pleasant environment when living in the city. Overall, while these three viewpoints were all present in the replies, the majority were supportive, but concerned about cost.

Michael Ford, Oshkosh Common Council Member

City councilman Michael Ford took time to respond to questions about the creation of a sustainability manager position. Ford noted he would like to see such a position integrated into the City Manager's team. Ford also said he would like to make sure there is buy-in from the city staff, and for the new position to have clear authority and a clear portfolio.

Walter Williams, Local Business Manager

Walter Williams is an Oshkosh resident. Williams is considered a secondary stakeholder. Williams was supportive of the hiring of a sustainability manager, even if it meant he saw taxes rise. Williams noted that he did not receive any education about sustainability in the Oshkosh public school system, and would like for that to change. When asked about concerns he may have about creating this position, Williams responded that he had none.

Brad Spanbauer, UW Oshkosh Sustainability Advisor

Brad Spanbauer is the sustainability manager for the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh and a resident of Oshkosh. Spanbauer has a lot of experience in sustainability management and is going to be a secondary stakeholder and an expert. Spanbauer emphasized the importance of sustainability and said that if an organization wants to be sustainable they need to have a person or group that can dedicate themselves to sustainable practices. During the interview, Spanbauer said that it is human nature to want to focus on things that are happening now but he says that will damage sustainability in the long run. Spanbauer also stated that a person in a sustainability position must view all three of the pillars (economic, environmental, social) of sustainability and that a city can not be truly sustainable unless there is dedication to each of them. The critical factor, according to Spanbauer, of the position is that it has to be the right person that can work with the public on policy change, city budgets, new proposals, and grant funding. During the interview, Spanbauer said that a clearly defined position is also important because boundaries have to be established so that there is not an over reach in power but also there is enough being done to make the

position worthwhile. Overall, Spanbauer thinks that a sustainability manager for the city of Oshkosh would not only help him as an employee at UW-Oshkosh and a citizen of Oshkosh but also as a member of a group dedicated to sustainable practices.

Benchmarking

Racine, Wisconsin

Racine has a population of about 77,000 and has a similar demographic to Oshkosh. They are currently in the process of hiring a sustainability manager with the position funded by the city's utilities. The goal of the position is to lead the city's Sustainability and Conservation Office. Within the office, the mayor wants the sustainability manager to focus on finding grants to help make the city a more sustainable location. They also want the sustainability manager to bridge the gap of the social pillar of sustainability and advocate more to the citizens of Racine. The sustainability manager is going to be the one representing the city at different external meetings that involve sustainability in one way or another. Racine may still be in the process of hiring a sustainability manager but there has been no lack of qualified applicants. See Appendix A for the full job description for Racine's position.

Menomonie, Wisconsin

Menomonie has been a great benchmarking example. Megen Hines has been the full time Environmental Program Coordinator for Menomonie, WI since 2020 and has the same duties that a sustainability manager could have for Oshkosh. Hines is the first person in this position for Menomonie and was hired because the city wanted to dedicate more resources to being sustainable but needed a person to manage it. Hines' position was not funded by grants but she gets her salary paid for by the utilities within the city. Hines spends a lot of time working to help find ways that sustainable practices can generate money for Menomonie. One way that she was able to do this was starting a project to get a second solid waste compactor built in the city. The initial cost for the compactor was 26,000 dollars. By the end of this year, because of public advocacy and the fewer trips to empty the compactor, the city is going to see a full return in investment. Hines also sees that there is an importance to a position like a sustainability manager to advocate to the citizens. When Hines is approached by citizens who are asking about her projects, she sees it as a great opportunity to not only build a better connection with the residents but also show the importance of sustainability. One of the best ways to help a city become sustainable is to show the importance of sustainability to the citizens and Hines has taken full advantage of this part of the job. Menomonie has a population of about 16,000 people and they can generate a 46,000 dollar salary, before benefits, for a full time position dedicated to sustainability. Oshkosh has a population of over 66,000 so if the city is truly dedicated to sustainability then they should be able to find a way to make a permanent position.

Goleta, California

There are 33,000 people living in Goleta but it is a different example because it is in California. The cost of living in California is about five times higher than the cost of living in Oshkosh but salaries should still even out. The position is funded by cities utilities and an increase on the citizen's property taxes. Cindy Moore is the sustainability manager for Goleta and has impacted the city greatly on the environmental side of sustainability. She has helped support the city's goal to be 100% renewable energy based by 2040 by implementing the city's first solar photovoltaic project. She also has been the key contributor in the installation of more electric car charging stations and has helped promote the usage of electric cars over combustion related vehicles. Cindy also spends a lot of her time working with the planning and environmental review of housing, building, safety, and sustainability programs.

Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Stevens Point, Wisconsin, does not employ a sustainability manager. Instead, the City of Stevens Point is in line with our alternative recommendation, which is directing all city staff to take into account sustainability, and pursue sustainable projects. The instruction to do this at a city wide level came from an elected official, mayor Mike Wiza. Since giving this instruction, Stevens Point has enacted a number of sustainable minded policies and projects. Some of these include: city owned electric vehicle charging stations, LED light swap outs, road salt use reduction, curbside compost pickup, and planning fuel efficient routes for city vehicles. In addition to these projects, Stevens Point has converted its wastewater treatment facility into a resource recovery facility. This required a biogas generator that captures the methane from the treatment plant, and converts it into electricity. This project now creates 98% of the power needed to run the facility, according to Wiza. As well as being sustainable, the biogas generator saves on the electricity costs for the treatment facility.

Stevens Point is a great example to look to when searching for examples of our alternative recommendation. The city is also a mid-sized college town located in Wisconsin. Oshkosh's population is more than double that of Stevens Point, giving it a larger tax base for funding projects similar to that of Stevens Point.

Burlington, Vermont

Burlington is a college town of about 42,000 located on the shore of Lake Champlain in northern Vermont. Despite being in Vermont, Burlington and Oshkosh share similarities in that they are both mid-sized, college towns. Burlington, Vermont hired a sustainability manager in 2008. Since then, the city of Burlington has converted to run on 100% renewable energy. Other projects include the creation of bioswales and rain gardens in order to mitigate runoff to nearby Lake Champlain. The sustainability manager also enacted Burlington's climate action plan, a set of goals and policies the

city is looking to achieve. Burlington has also achieved international accolades for their accomplishments in sustainability. The United Nations has cited Burlington as a model city of sustainability.

The city of Burlington pays their sustainability manager a salary of \$92,000. While high, the cost of housing in Burlington is 47% higher than the national average. Adjusted, this would mean a salary of around \$49,000. Burlington pays their manager via tax dollars.

Burlington shows that a sustainability manager can bring about meaningful change, even earning international recognition. Burlington made waves as the first city to be on 100% renewable energy, and continues to draw residents and retain college students as a result.

Middleton, Wisconsin

Middleton, Wisconsin hired a sustainability coordinator in 2016. Middleton is a relevant benchmarking example due to being a midsized, Wisconsin city. The position was created in response to the results of a citywide referendum that asked, "Should the City of Middleton reduce the risks of global warming through its policy decisions and actions?". This question got 80.6% "yes" responses. Middleton pays the sustainability coordinator a salary of \$53,000. Middleton has received accolades since creating the position. These include: Renewable Energy Pioneer of the Year 2019 and a Dane County Climate Champion. Middleton was also named a Bicycle Friendly Community by the Wisconsin Bicycle Federation, a Bird City, and Tree City USA. See Appendix C for other awards and achievements the city has gotten. Middleton was also awarded multiple grants since the hiring of the coordinator. Middleton received a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for cities award in 2020, a \$500,000 grant. Middleton also received \$200,000 in 2018 through the Energy Innovation Grant Award, and was awarded \$212,000 via the same grant in 2020. See Appendix B and Appendix C for details on these grants. These successful grant applications show that Middleton is actually ahead when it comes to the cost of employing a sustainability coordinator.

Appleton, Wisconsin

The City of Appleton, Wisconsin is one city Oshkosh can look at when considering this proposal. The city is located on the Fox River and near Lake Winnebago, like Oshkosh, and has a similar population to Oshkosh. In Appleton's 2020 Climate Action plan they detailed the need to hire an "Energy and Sustainability Coordinator" to head a new energy and sustainability office. Their plan is to have this position organize, prioritize and oversee the city's sustainability projects and progress towards goals laid out in the climate action plan. They also want this position to help bridge different departments and allow them to work in collaboration to tackle

sustainability issues. They will also help other communities and cities within the Fox Valley collaborate with each other.

Outagamie County has a “sustainability taskforce”, consisting of members already employed by the county.

<https://www.outagamie.org/home/showpublisheddocument/18660/63624389794337000>
0 This document details some of the accomplishments of the task force from 2006-2011 and the cost saving they were able to generate and shows that sustainability issues require the work of multiple departments within the city’s government. Just by replacing lights and installing motion sensors on some street lights they were able to save over 500,000 kWh. They also were able to install a photovoltaic and solar thermal systems to the roof of their airport and generate almost 52,000 kWh of electricity and save almost 20,000 kWh annually among many other accomplishments. They accomplished these things by working with departments like finance, highway, human resources and solid waste management to name a few.

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Eau Claire is another city that Oshkosh can look to when considering the proposal for a city sustainability manager. Eau Claire is located on the Chippewa River and has a population similar to Oshkosh’s as well. Their 2021 proposed budget is a little more than \$3,000,000 less than Oshkosh’s 2020 budget. In 2008 Eau Claire’s city manager was able to form the city’s Green Team consisting of members of city staff from various departments appointed to advance the city closer to it’s sustainability goals. They also help to educate community members and staff about how they can be more sustainable in their day to day lives by creating brochures accessible online and through email, <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/government/our-divisions/sustainability/city-green-team> and

<https://www.eauclairewi.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/18976/6363710735787300>
00 . One of the major accomplishments of the Green Team was their ability to secure funding for the city. In 2012 they were able to secure \$770,000 for the city to use for sustainability initiatives. They also received an EPA grant from the Wisconsin DNR to study solar array viability on closed landfills and researched viability of other various projects. Other accomplishments from 2012 can be viewed through this link- <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/5585/63528572697417000>
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Although it seems like their Green Team has shifted their focus towards more education than direct research and implementation , reading Eau Claire's reports, <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/government/our-divisions/sustainability/green-city>, there is still a strong focus on sustainability. This proposal doesn;t have to be a long-term or permanent commitment but by allowing Oshkosh to accomplish some tangible things

progress could continue without the position, or shifting the position into a different function or team.

Costs

There are some costs associated with the hiring of a city sustainability manager for Oshkosh. The main cost would be paying a salary which on the low end could be about \$45-50,000 but as mayor Palmeri has said would be closer to \$80,000 including benefits. There are methods that can be used to come up with the funding like grants. Green Bay was able to secure a three year grant through the Fund for Lake Michigan to help pay a portion of the salary of their Resiliency Coordinator while the rest is paid for through their stormwater utility revenue. 25 percent is paid through that revenue the first year, 40 percent the second year and 50 percent the third year. Mellisa Schmitz, the person in this position, told me that after the three years are up Green Bay will have to decide to use tax levy dollars, additional revenue from the stormwater utility, or funds from other sources if they decide to keep the position. Additional costs would arise after the creation of this position to accomplish projects and reach goals. It takes money for a city to implement new infrastructure and tools to allow them to be more sustainable but most of them can eventually pay for themselves and more over time. In Green Bay they were able to install two solar panel arrays, one in Leicht Park and one on Fire Station 5, to generate electricity for the city. The larger 19.2 kW array generated 11,323 kWh from August 3, 2021 to April 18, 2022 and the 7.68 kW array generated 6452 kWh in that same time frame. The City of Racine was also able to install a second solid waste compactor for \$26,000 and in just two years it was able to produce that same amount in savings and the city will be able to use that saved funding for other things. Appendix B shows a document listing different cities, the grants they applied to and received and for projects that the money was used for. For example the City of Ashland applied for an Energy Innovation Grant to buy and install a 33.3 kW solar array on their police station and they received \$99,000. The system will save them over \$6,000 annually and pay for itself in two and a half years. Mukwanago also received \$420,000 to install a solar array on top of their high school which will offset almost half of their energy needs, saving them \$41,000 annually and paying for itself in just eight years.

Barriers

The barriers for this proposal can mainly fall under costs. Getting the money to fund this position will be the key issue to overcome. Private and governmental grants

would make the most sense and probably receive the most public support. Proposals must “have near-term, direct and quantifiable impacts on water quality in the Lake Michigan watershed.” to be considered and given Oshkosh’s location on Lake Winnebago we are within the watershed area. Another barrier would be overall support from the community towards the creation of a city sustainability manager position. In a lot of cases the term sustainability can cause concern among people who might not fully understand the need or benefits towards making a community more sustainable. Higher costs are usually associated with that but generally in the long term sustainability can actually save cities money and in turn save citizens money. A sustainability manager can help promote sustainability projects and explain long term benefits that will outweigh any short term costs, like the initial investment into more renewable energy eventually generating revenue. There are also countless grants that cities can apply for to fund projects that can eventually pay for themselves and generate the city more revenue but it can be hard to do that without having someone able to dedicate their time to apply for them.

Significance for Sustainability

The way a city can be more sustainable revolves around how they can best manage the three pillars of sustainability. All of the benchmarking examples and stakeholders show how they and the cities they are in can be more sustainable. There are many examples of how a sustainability manager can help Oshkosh be a more sustainable place for current and future generations.

According to the UN Environment Programme, 75% of world CO2 emissions come from cities. That is why it is important for cities of all sizes to commit more time and resources to sustainability, in order to combat the climate crisis. The UN reports "Only with a coordinated approach and action at the global, regional, national and local levels, can success be achieved. It is essential, therefore, to make cities an integral part of the solution in fighting climate change" (UN Environment Programme, 2022).

One of the most important ways that sustainability can be achieved in the social pillar is through the homes of the citizens of Oshkosh. Several of the stakeholders that were interviewed are citizens of Oshkosh and believe that sustainability is important for the city. Misty McPhee has spent time working with the city to help her own home become more sustainable. A sustainability manager is going to be able to work with all citizens who want to make more sustainable choices in their own homes. Finding ways for the city to implement more solar power at cheaper costs for the residents is going to make it easier for the community to get on board with sustainable practices. Solar power is just one thing that can be made more accessible to the community. The social pillar also draws attention to the areas of Oshkosh that have lower incomes. A sustainability manager will be able to help with poverty reduction by finding grants and starting projects to improve the living conditions of those who are in need. Each step in the process of sustainability is equally important. The more citizens who have to worry about their next meal, the less support will be generated for sustainable practices.

A sustainable city is also one that can manage its funding well. The economic side of sustainability can be considered the most important because there is a need for funding in all aspects of sustainability. The key task for all sustainability managers and sustainability boards that were examined for this project is to find grant funding for sustainable projects. There are costs associated with the introduction of the position but the return on investment has paid for positions within the first few years of the position being active. If a city can only dedicate four hours of a person's weekly schedule to sustainability, there is going to be no way that the city can accomplish the sustainable goals that they set. Grant searching and application can take a lot of time, but then there is the overview of projects that must be addressed to ensure that the funds are being used properly. There are grants out there for all sorts of projects and as addressed in the background, it just takes the right person to find them. Eventually, the

city will need a sustainability manager because it will become too costly to not have one looking for ways that they can be sustainable and protect the environment.

You cannot have a discussion about sustainability without addressing the environment. In several of the benchmarking examples, cities have lessened their carbon footprint by implementing new projects that sustainability managers have headed. Every project that has been proposed by students taking this course helps to lower the carbon footprint of Oshkosh. However, a sustainability manager can not only implement their own projects, but they will be able to push forward other projects presented by outside resources like the university. There are going to be many different environmental changes within the next few decades and without someone dedicated to helping solve these issues before they arise, there is going to be damages that the city is not prepared for that are going to damage all three pillars of sustainability.

Cities are important to sustainability because that is where the most action happens. Recently the governmental divide in the country has made it almost impossible to accomplish things at the federal level. In Pew Research Center's article from 2014, they provide the information about how the country's main political parties have become skewed left and right. Their article shows how in 1994, most democrats and republicans were close to the middle of the two parties. However, by 2014, 92% of republicans were more right than the previous median and 93% of democrats were left of the previous median. This trend has continued and currently the political divide is the worst it has been in the country. Action in cities is important because in Michael Maniates article titled *Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?*, there is a call to action that demonstrates the need for people to go farther than the individual actions that are often cited as the best ways to be environmentally friendly. It is important to recycle and use fuel efficient cars, but eventually things can no longer be recycled and even electric cars contribute to pollution.

Not many mid-sized cities in Wisconsin, like Oshkosh, have a sustainability manager. Oshkosh has the chance to help set the standard for a more sustainable state. The city has the opportunity to be a good template for all cities around the country and draw more attention to our part of the state. Oshkosh has sustainable goals and if it wants to meet as many of them as possible, it is essential that a position is created.

Conclusion

Through all of the information that was provided, it is clear that a city like Oshkosh could benefit greatly from the addition of a sustainability manager. The goals set by Oshkosh to become more sustainable are only going to be achieved through a person being able to dedicate their daily routine to becoming sustainable. There are many cities that are smaller than Oshkosh that have a position dedicated to sustainability. If these cities like

Middleton and Menomonie can establish a position then why can't a larger city like Oshkosh follow suit? There are going to be costs and barriers associated with the implementation of a sustainability manager but the benefits are going to outweigh any of the negatives that may come about. They are going to be able to generate enough income to pay for their position every year. The future of the environment may be mostly unknown, but one way that humans can prepare for it is making sure that current precautions are taken. It is better to be proactive than reactive when it comes to climate change. Being sustainable takes many steps to be truly impactful, but if there is someone to guide the process, then the journey of a thousand miles can seem like a walk in the park.

Appendix A

- This position manages and implements the City of Racine Office of Sustainability and Conservation, embracing the best ecological practices and policies extending into government, community, services, and infrastructure.
- The program's ultimate goal is to protect and optimize the City's natural resources and "built" environments by creatively incorporating sustainable practices and behaviors throughout the City of Racine and the Retail Service area of the Racine Water Utility.
- These programs are accomplished in accordance with the City's commitment to sustainability, resilience, and adaptation.
- Researches, and applies for, applicable grants in order to further develop and improve sustainable City initiatives.
- Administers and manages grants if received to improve City sustainability efforts or conservation efforts
- Develops criteria, policies, and procedures for sustainable programs.
- Administers training and outreach to City personnel for the development, adoption, and implementation of sustainable practices in City operations.
- Assists departments in identifying and implementing best practices in sustainable operations by acting as a resource to and directing staff activities with the public, City departments, and other organizations on programs and policies related to the Sustainability and Conservation as directed by the Mayor, and/or Chief of Staff, specifically in the areas of conservation, transportation, pollution prevention, and climate action.
- Strengthens existing partnerships with community organizations and expands network and partnerships.
- Identifies potential energy savings and greenhouse gas reduction projects/strategies, and evaluates such projects/strategies in terms of feasibility and satisfaction of designated criteria.
- Represents the City at external meetings, and as a member of external organizations and committees.

- May make presentations to City Council and/or represent the City and/or Utility at meetings of City Boards and Commissions and civic or professional groups.
- Required meetings may be held outside of normal business hours.
- Serves as the primary staff person responsible for reporting on efforts towards the STAR/LEED community-rating framework.
- Maintains current knowledge of trends and initiatives in the field of sustainability by attending relevant conferences/seminars, and/or by networking with counterparts at other organizations.
- Conducts research studies and surveys and produces reports recommending appropriate courses of action for solutions to environmental/sustainability problems.
- Directs the preparation of reports, documents, and correspondence and makes public presentations;
- Performs other duties as required.
- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in natural or environmental science or studies, sustainability studies, public policy, or a substantially similar area and three (3) or more years of work experience in sustainability policy and program development, research and analysis, and project management.
- Combination of experience & education will be considered.
- Must possess a valid driver's license.
- Considerable knowledge of issues, laws and regulations related to all areas of sustainability.
- Resource conservation, transportation, pollution prevention and public health protection, and community and economic development.
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing; including making presentations to a variety of audiences throughout the City and community.
- Ability to research new initiatives and implement in a seamless fashion.
- Ability to identify, analyze and problem solve, assisting departments in incorporating sustainable practices into the organization.
- Ability to develop, implement and evaluate projects and programs.
- Ability to provide effective project management oversight.
- Ability to interact effectively with City staff, the public, and City boards and commissions.
- A majority of the work is performed indoors in an office environment, occasionally performing field visits/observations of practices, projects and environments.
- Work involves frequently changing priorities and the ability to meet tight deadlines.
- May require occasional work at off-site locations.
- Works under the supervision of the Chief of Staff and Mayor, who outlines work assignments and reviews work in progress and completed work.
- Works closely with all departments to educate and assist in the incorporation of sustainable practices as appropriate.
- Employee is expected to provide leadership to all City departments in achieving sustainable goals.
- Guidance is provided via City Code, City policies and procedures and/or initiatives, applicable state and federal laws and regulations, as well as a wide variety of

information relating to sustainable practices, ensuring that initiatives meet legal requirements.

- Work is evaluated at least annually with respect to progress toward achieving goals, leadership, communication skills, customer service, ability to work productively and effectively with employees at all levels in the organization as well as elected and appointed officials, community groups and the general public.
- The employee has regular contact with employees at all levels within the organization as well as individual citizens and groups, elected officials, and various people from other organizations outside of the City of Racine and the surrounding area

Appendix B

2018 Energy Innovation Grant Awards

The following applications were selected for award negotiations during the September 27, 2018 Open Meeting of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. The award selections will be finalized upon issuance of a final Order.

Map Ref #	Applicant	ERF Ref #	Description	Award Amount
2	School District of Arcadia	347328	This project proposes to replace two diesel school buses in the district's fleet with propane school buses. The payback period for the buses is less than three years.	\$12,000.00
4	City of Ashland, Planning and Development Department	347301	This project proposes to install a 33.3 kW Solar PV System. The system has an annual savings of \$5,224, with a simple payback of 2.5 years, assuming grant funding.	\$99,000.00
6	Bayfield County	347407	This project has three components: A renewable energy component that seeks to install 160 kW of solar at two county buildings, improved cooling systems, and a conversion of two new sheriff squads to CNG and biofuel. The project has an 11-year payback.	\$133,989.00
8	City of Beaver Dam	347421	This project proposes to upgrade the HVAC systems in the City Hall and Fire & Rescue Department.	\$257,879.00
9	Brown County	347434	This project proposes to install a 98 kW solar energy system. The expected break-even point is during year 18.	\$211,580.00
12	County of Dane	347384 347390	This project proposes to implement systems to take advantage of landfill gas and use it for CNG fueling and building heating. The payback period for the project is 9.7 years.	\$450,000.00
13	Darlington Community School District	347389	The proposed feasibility study seeks to investigate the feasibility of having the state's first zero net energy schools.	\$49,970.00
16	Denmark School District	347432	This project proposes three efficiency upgrades: LED lighting retrofits, cool-roof replacements, and building envelope improvements. The simple payback for the project is 24.6 years.	\$128,766.00
18	Drummond Area School District	346517	This feasibility study seeks to investigate the feasibility of a PV system and Energy Efficiency measures.	\$4,734.00
20	Eau Claire Renewable Energy Action Plan	347391 348214	The proposed plan seeks to help Eau Claire set new energy independence goals, as the city has already met its 25% by 2025 goal.	\$180,000.00
25	Expera Specialty Solutions Holdings, Inc.	347364 347720	This project proposes to improve production efficiency of renewable energy and improve building energy usage efficiency. The total payback period before grants is 2.0 years. With grants, the payback period is 1.5 years.	\$114,000.00
28	Forest County Potawatomi Community	346341	This project proposes to install a 103 kW solar PV system and a 300 kWh solar PV battery storage system. This will result in an estimated annual savings of \$11,772, with a simple payback of 25 years.	\$301,535.00

Map Ref #	Applicant	ERF Ref #	Description	Award Amount
35	School District of Holmen	347325	This project proposes to add three new propane school buses to an existing fleet with its own fueling station. The payback period for the buses is less than three years.	\$18,000.00
37	Juda School District	346491	This project proposes to implement a number of energy efficiency upgrades in the school district, including LED Lighting, building envelope improvements, and installing a 4.225 kW solar array. The annual energy savings are around \$30,438, with a payback period of around 5.8 years.	\$227,363.00
45	County of La Crosse	347197	This project proposes to install 1245 LED lights in La Crosse County's Health and Human Services building. The project will generate an estimated savings of \$26,456/year, resulting in a simple payback of 1.4 years.	\$90,000.00
46	School District of La Crosse	347317	This project proposes to upgrade lighting at two school buildings. This will reduce energy consumption by over 70%, with a simple payback period of	\$130,580.51

Map Ref #	Applicant	ERF Ref #	Description	Award Amount
76	City of Racine	347408	This comprehensive energy plan seeks to set clean energy goals and identify opportunities for reducing energy and deploying renewable energy resources.	\$78,000.00
79	School District of Reedsburg	347195	This project proposes to upgrade the lighting at 3 schools, resulting in an estimated savings of \$124,355/year, with a simple payback of 1.53 years.	\$345,000.00
81	Riverdale High Schools	347193 346885	This project proposes to upgrade lighting in 4 of the applicant's buildings. The project will result in an estimated \$49,698/year with a simple payback of .99 years.	\$135,000.00
84	Solon Springs School District	347394	This project proposes to install a 100 kW solar array. The estimated payback period for the project is 7.5 years.	\$124,500.00
91	School District of Washburn	347362	This project proposes to install a 120 kW Solar PV System. The project has an estimated 12-year payback period.	\$50,335.00
92	City of Waterloo	347194	This project proposes to upgrade lighting and install wireless thermostats at 5 of their buildings. The project will provide an estimated savings of \$22,983/year.	\$50,000.00
94	City of Wausau	347177	This project proposes to upgrade lighting in City-owned parking ramps. The proposed upgrades would cut energy use by 84% compared to the existing system, resulting in an annual savings of 896,586 kWh, with a 3.02-year payback period.	\$150,900.00
Total				\$4,994,727.51

Appendix C

Awards and Achievements

- [Renewable Energy Pioneer of the Year \(2019\)](#) - RENEW Wisconsin for the Middleton Municipal Airport solar project
- [Recognition as a Bird City](#) - Bird City Wisconsin
- [Dane County Climate Champion \(2020\)](#)
- [Bicycle Friendly Community](#) - Wisconsin Bike Fed
- [LEED for Cities 2020 Grant Award](#) - As outlined in a [city press release \(PDF\)](#), Middleton is using the grant to work towards LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for Cities certification. This process aids in understanding how Middleton succeeds in sustainable practices and how improvements can be made to increase the city's sustainability.
- [2022 Energy Innovation Grant Award for Beneficial Electrification and Solar + Battery Storage in Affordable Housing](#)
- [2020 Energy Innovation Grant Program Award for Battery Storage at the Police Department](#)
- [2018 Energy Innovation Grant Award for Energy Planning](#) - Office of Energy Innovation and Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
- [Tree City USA Participant](#)

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