
2017 Safety Award

Taylor Moellers
Department of Environmental Health

Nomination submitted by Paul Schmiechen

Taylor Moellers is being nominated as an individual for the 5281 Sustainability Award. Taylor leads the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program (SNP), which was first started in 2013. Denver's SNP gives residents the opportunity to become active partners in making Denver a vibrant and sustainable community.

Neighborhoods participating in this unique certification program organize workshops, projects, and events that enhance the livability of their neighborhood and reduce residents' ecological footprint. Participating neighborhoods earn program credits for their efforts and, depending on the number of credits earned in a given year, they may receive designation as a "Participating Sustainable Neighborhood" or an "Outstanding Sustainable Neighborhood" from the city. TheCity provides in-kind resources, such as printing, venue fees, and staff time to support projects. The Program works with residents to identify and implement projects that focus on 5 areas: Energy, Land, Water, Air and People. <https://www.sustainableneighborhoodnetwork.org/sustainable-neighborhoods-denver>

Taylor has been with the Program from the start and has grown it into one of the Department of Environmental Health's most recognized community programs. Her commitment to the Program and her passion for the work has helped to build strong bridges with neighborhoods around sustainability programs. She has helped coach residents to implement numerous projects that have improved neighborhoods and enhanced the local environment. She spends numerous evenings and weekends working with neighborhoods and residents to improve the environment and quality of life in the communities. She has also spent a large amount of time streamlining the program and making it more efficient, including making enhancements to the website, simplifying the application procedure and standardizing the kick-off meeting and engagement efforts. Her vision for the Program is to build deeper relationships with the existing neighborhoods and encourage greater efforts in the areas of energy efficiency, waste management, mobility, and community resilience.

Over the last 3 years, Taylor and the SNP program have achieved significant results.

- 11 neighborhoods are participating in the program (out of 77 in the city)
- 4 more are being added in 2017, which will result in 20% of Denver's neighborhoods participating
- Over 8700 residents have participated in neighborhood projects to date
- In 2016 alone, 140 neighborhood projects were started and received credit
- An SNP Matching Fund was created, resulting in 3 selected neighborhood projects totaling \$7,500:
 - Funding energy efficiency upgrades for historic homes in the Baker Neighborhood
 - Assistance for xeriscaping Athmar Park resident's lawns to save water
 - Creation of a garden-in-a-box program to help Park Hill residents install backyard gardens

The SNP directly ties to the following 2020 goals: energy, waste, food, and mobility. The following project examples from the last few years support those goals and others:

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- Multiple community garden installations, including Villa Park
 - Green Valley Ranch farmers market – 17 vendors and 350+ attendees
 - Baker Home Tour emphasizing energy efficiency – over 300 attendees
 - Multiple neighborhoods, including Barnum, planting dozens of trees on private property
 - Numerous composting workshops, including West Colfax (15 attendees)
 - Multiple neighborhoods promoting walking through the Walkscope tool
 - Multiple neighborhood beautification and clean-up projects, including North City Park, Barnum and West Colfax, involving hundreds of people

Taylor has done an excellent job building and expanding a key program that meets many resident's sustainability needs, and deserves to be recognized for this work. While most of the work has focused on specific projects that achieve resource conservation results, one of the biggest results due to her work has been related to community connectivity and community engagement. Residents in the program have built stronger connections to other residents, resulting in more cohesive and connected neighborhoods. In addition, there is now a larger group of neighborhood leaders, which will help the City enhance its existing programs including recycling/composting and mobility.