

**An Analysis of Elected Officials and Sustainable Cities: Individual Backgrounds  
and their Impact on the Pursuit of Sustainability**

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## Who Takes Sustainability Seriously?

Why is it that some cities take the ever-growing concept of *sustainability* seriously, and others do not? What is it about the character of cities that pushes them to take action or remain inactive? Some cities in the United States have begun an extensive campaign to put their municipality on the track of smart growth and conservation. Others, the vast majority of cities in this country, remain in the fixed mindset of traditional economic growth and planning even in this time of rising gas prices, increasing pollution, and burgeoning populations.

My research attempts to reach the root of this question. What is the spark, the impetus that drives some cities towards sustainability? My research leads me to conclude that city council members and mayors are very good indicators to determine whether or not a city is on the track towards sustainability. This same data also helps to explain why many cities have no intention or hope of becoming sustainable.

In order to comprehend the impact of elected city government officials on the direction of their cities, I decided to focus on their backgrounds, occupations, education, and interests. In particular, I separated the backgrounds of these officials into categories labeled traditional and alternative. My hypothesis is based on these characteristics:

Cities whose council members and mayor have alternative backgrounds are more likely to take sustainability seriously than cities whose elected officials are from traditional backgrounds.

By background, I do not mean the way in which people were raised as children, although I would not completely discount it, but rather the types of occupations they have had and continue to have, the groups or activities they pursue in their free time, and their educations. I found that in order to categorize officials, I needed to organizationally operationalize the terms traditional and alternative. I created a chart into which I put education and occupation data for each candidate.

Education is on the y-axis and occupation is on the x-axis.

	Alternative	Neutral	Traditional
Alternative			
Neutral			
Traditional			

Each elected official is placed into one of these cells depending on his or her highest degree and current and former professions. With this data, I separated the officials into two categories for simplicity: traditional and alternative. I will describe trends and specific categorization in the sections entitled Analysis of Council Members.

In general, traditional backgrounds refer to jobs and educations that fit into traditional economic markets and usually include various types of businesspeople. Alternative educations and occupations generally involve environmental or social justice work. Many occupations and educations are not easily categorized into traditional or alternative, so they fall into the neutral category. I came across no official in my two focus cities that falls into the neutral category for both criteria. Overall, I gave more weight to the officials' occupations than their education when finally placing them into the traditional or alternative categories. It is what they do with their educations, and not the educations themselves, that determines whether or not one takes sustainability seriously.

### What is Sustainability?

This is the ten thousand dollar question. Sustainability is a vague term referring to any number of environmental, educational, or planning methods. There have been countless attempts to define the term, and it has come to the point where there are dozens of working definitions. These varying definitions of the same word are all reasonable and make sense when put in the proper context. The lack of consensus on a single definition is not at all negative; such ambiguity has allowed the concept of sustainability to evolve and take root in numerous different political, philosophical, and scientific arenas.

For this paper, I decided to use a broad definition of sustainability. In order to determine whether or not a city is working towards sustainability, I needed to look at the overall well-being of the city; I thereby determined this by looking at its natural

environment, education systems, population demographics, economy, transportation, equity, and numerous other characteristics. One particular area in which I focused my research was sustainable development or “smart growth” initiatives.

I draw on two particular definitions of sustainability as a basis for my working definition of sustainability.

- 1) *Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs.* (The Brundtland Commission, 1987)
- 2) *Sustainable development involves devising a social and economic system, which ensures that these goals are sustained, i.e. that real incomes rise, that educational standards increase, that the health of the nation improves, that the general quality of life is advanced.* (Pearce, Makandia & Barbier, 1989)

### Methodology

Before delving into information on the backgrounds of council members, I researched the sustainability of my focus cities. Most cities in the United States have their own webpages; these online sources are very helpful in finding data on the demographics, programs, initiatives, and overall health of cities. City webpages coupled with U.S. Census data and interviews provided me with the background information necessary to determine whether or not specific cities take sustainability seriously.

With a general understanding of the status of sustainability in each city, I endeavored to ascertain the backgrounds of the cities’ respective elected officials. Information on the former occupations, educations, and interests of city council members and mayors is not readily accessible. Some elected officials post brief biographies on their city website or on the websites they create when running or re-running for their position. However, this is not the general trend. Even when they do post such information, it rarely includes their education or complete listing of their former occupations. Because of this problem, I made use of journalists in the officials’ cities. These journalists, especially those who report on local politics or environmental issues, often have background information on local officials, as well as local insight. In Boulder, Colorado, for example, the former Metro Editor for the Daily Camera provided me with brief biographies of each council member. Even in cities like Provo City, Utah where the journalists did not have such information, they were able to provide me with the phone numbers of council members. To collect the necessary background information in Provo

City, I called each official and asked him or her standard questions on their education/training, former occupations, and activity in environmental initiatives. Although this process was more difficult and time consuming than my efforts in Boulder, the one-on-one interaction with council members provided me with the opportunity to get a personal feel for the political and social atmosphere of the city.

I found it very useful to speak to people other than the council members themselves in order to create an objective view of the situation rather than rely solely on what the council members wanted me to know. The local Provo City newspaper, the Daily Herald, has an environmental reporter that provided me with comprehensive insight as to which officials are or have been active in environmental initiatives. I will discuss this interview later. I gained further local insight on Provo City transportation initiatives by communicating via email with the Assistant Director of Provo City Community Development and on local environmental problems from the Environmental Protection Specialist at the Provo Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation.

#### Sustainable v. Traditional

I focused my research on two cities in the mountain region of the American west: Provo City, Utah and Boulder, Colorado. Both cities are of equal size and contain respected liberal arts universities. Nevertheless, their respective attempts at sustainability are as divergent as one will find when researching this subject.

#### **Boulder, Colorado**

Boulder is a city of approximately 105,000 people and simply put, Boulder takes sustainability very seriously. Most of Boulder's sustainability programs and initiatives are easily accessible at [www.ci.boulder.co.us](http://www.ci.boulder.co.us), the city's homepage. Before I discuss the correlation between Boulder's elected officials and the city's attempts at sustainability, I will provide some background as to why Boulder is rated 26 out of 30 in Kent Portney's Index of Sustainability. (Portney, Kent 2003)

Sustainability issues and projects in Boulder:

- 1) New Environmental Code Enforcement Management Review. This review attempts to a) refine environmental enforcement citation procedures, b) hold public and internal forums about restorative justice models of dispute in these

- cases, and c) complete independent evaluation of the city's effectiveness in this area. The Review is very organizationally and structurally based and was created by the city in conjunction with Dr. John Martin.
- 2) Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) reduction program. This program's goals and actions include a) 7% reduction from 1990 levels. These are the Kyoto mandated levels and the city has a local action plan to meet these restrictions. B) Appropriation of \$100,000 for GHG and energy programs in 2004. The city also collected \$258,000 for GHG and energy initiatives through the Trash Tax. I will discuss this tax later. C) Boulder has distributed 2,100 efficient light bulbs and has held halogen lamp swaps. The city also has given \$55,000 in lighting rebates to local businesses, which have saved \$104,000 a year in energy costs. An Outdoor Illumination Ordinance attempts to reduce light pollution and promote energy conservation. D) Boulder has been an ENERGY STAR partner since 1997 and participated in the "Change a Light, Change the World" campaign. E) Member of Rocky Mountain Climate Organization. This organization is dedicated to increasing awareness about climate change impacts. F) Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX). This is a voluntary, legally binding commitment to reduce GHG 4% below the city's 1998-2001 average by 2006. (Office of Environmental Affairs, 2005)
  - 3) Trash Tax. Boulder initiated this tax in 1988. It is a tax on trash haulers based on the amount of trash collected in the city. The tax currently generates \$987,000 per year for the city. A proposed tax increase will create an additional \$468,000 annually. This tax revenue is used for several waste-reduction related programs as well as the city's GHG programs, including a) curbside recycling program, b) leaf collection, c) yard waste drop-off, d) parks and public recycling, e) in-school recycling programs, and f) Boulder's Eco-Cycle Center for hard to recycle materials. (Frequently Asked Questions About the Proposed Trash Tax Increase, 2004)
  - 4) Eco-Cycle. Boulder operates a new county owned Boulder Recycling Center. In addition to physical recycling, the Center provides educational programs to 25,000 students and utilizes an "army" of 750 volunteers. The center's goal is to

- transform society's throwaway ethic into environmentally friendly stewardship. (Trash and Recycling, 2005)
- 5) Energy. Boulder has eight hydroelectric plants. These provide enough energy to power 6,000 homes. (Bruno, Frank. Personal interview. 20 April 2005)
  - 6) Lawns and Gardens. The city Recycling Center sells home composting bins, promotes xeriscaping, integrated pest management practices, and has an informative, easy to read website describing its programs. Another city website, [www.bouldersaveswater.net](http://www.bouldersaveswater.net) provides recommended watering schedules to save water as well as xeriscaping help.
  - 7) Green Building Program. The stated purpose of this program is to “encourage the use of cost-effective and sustainable remodeling and building methods that conserve fossil fuels, water and other natural resources.” This is an example of how Boulder consciously considers sustainability when it creates city programs. The Green Building Program promotes recycling of construction materials and better indoor air quality. The program requires building permit applicants to earn “points” by selecting green building measures in order to receive a building permit. (Title 9 Land Use Regulation, 2005) If the applicant does not receive sufficient points, he or she will not be given a permit to build. It is in this way that the city makes sure that all current and future homes built in the city will be environmentally friendly. The city also holds Green Building Workshops to educate the public and builders. Because the program is citywide, builders are not hurt economically because they are all held to the same standard and may pass extra costs onto the consumer. The artificially elevated home price in Boulder because of this program is evidence of an attempt to place quality of life above the bottom line.
  - 8) PACE (Partners for A Clean Environment). This is a voluntary, non-regulatory program that offers free pollution prevention education and technical assistance to Boulder County businesses. It consists of a partnership between the city government and local businesses. (Partners for a Clean Environment, 2005)

- 9) Environmental Advisory Board. This board consists of five members and advises the city manager, currently Frank Bruno, concerning waste management, energy, pollution, etc.
- 10) Prairie Dogs and Wild Birds Wildlife Protection Ordinance. This is a new ordinance that was adopted on January 18, 2005 by the city council to protect these animals during development of their habitats.
- 11) Valmont Butte Proposal. The city government purchased a 102-acre parcel for \$2.6 million to construct a new Biosolids recycling center as well as a Fire Training Center. (Valmont Butte Proposal)
- 12) Open Space Initiatives. Creating an open space ring to surround the city is one of the city council's priorities. Currently, the council is attempting to acquire an additional 40,000 acres of open space. The plan is to never develop this land and to use it for recreation. The council recently adopted a Visitor Master Plan; this plan attempts to govern the new land with a mix of preservation, protection, and utilization. (Bruno, Frank. Personal interview. 20 April 2005)
- 13) Indicators Project. The 1998 Community Indicators has evolved to include 50 data points that are broken up into four categories: 1) People 2) Environment 3) Economy 4) Culture and Society. A major purpose of the indicators project was to shed light on the question of whether or not Boulder can maintain its high quality of life as well as grow rapidly. The 1999 indicators report concluded, "quality of life is viewed as the golden goose that is in danger of being killed by the rapid pace of economic growth and its subsequent ramifications". (Indicators) Due in part to this project, Boulder residents and the city government have preferred to maintain a high quality of life even when it negatively affects economic growth.

### **Transportation**

- 14) Boulder Transit Village. The city purchased the site of this future village in 2004. The village will include 200-350 units of permanently affordable housing in addition to normal housing. The goal of this project is to create a "Great Boulder Place" that serves the community's regional transit needs and advances Boulder's long-range vision of multimodal transportation, affordable housing, and

environmental and economic sustainability. (Boulder Transit Village) The city wishes to pursue community priorities such as compact urban form and enhanced mobility through alternative transportation systems.

- 15) Alternative Transportation Initiatives. Boulder is currently creating new bicycle lanes on approximately a half dozen roads to connect existing bike paths and create a linked system to allow its citizens to travel farther and safer with alternative transportation methods. This initiative includes sidewalk additions as well as pedestrian bridges. These additions are part of the Missing Sidewalk Links Program. Much of this construction is being conducted in conjunction with wetland and stream restoration projects.

### Background of Boulder's Elected Officials

It is evident from the plethora of programs that Boulder pursues that it is attempting to take sustainability seriously. The real question is: why has Boulder put itself on this course? My hypothesis contends that one can determine whether or not a city will take sustainability seriously by the backgrounds of its council members and mayor.

Boulder's mayors have been particularly influential in the sustainable development of the city and their backgrounds coincide with my hypothesis. Both the former and current mayors, Will Toor and Mark Ruzzin respectively, have backgrounds, occupations, and interests that fall into the alternative category. Will Toor is a former mayor of Boulder and was first elected in 1998. Early on in his career he worked as a truck driver, mechanic and yard foreman for Eco-Cycle from 1981-1984, and again from 1986-1987. He has been the Director of the University of Colorado Environmental Center since 1992. There, he serves as an instructor in the Environmental Studies Program, teaching courses on: The Campus and the Biosphere, Environmental Leadership, and Transportation and Environmental Policy. During his tenure, the center has received national recognition including the "Outstanding School Recycling Program" award from the National Recycling Coalition, a "Way To Go" award from the U.S. EPA, a Renew America award for the student bus pass program, a Year 2000 Climate Protection Award from the U.S. EPA, and the 2001 Green Power Leadership Award from

the US Department of Energy for initiating the nation's largest university green power program. He is also the co-author of the book Finding A New Way: Campus Transportation For The Twenty-First Century, and is currently working on a new book on transportation planning for university towns. During his time as mayor, and currently as Boulder County Commissioner, Mr. Toor actively engaged his background and interests in the development of Boulder. His personal interests and hobbies reflect his passion for the environment as well; Mr. Toor is an active gardener, climber, and bicycle commuter. (William R. Toor) It was his desire to pursue sustainability that helped the concept grow into the strong sense of stewardship Boulder maintains today.

Current mayor Mark Ruzzin does not have quite as extensive and intensive an environmental background as Mr. Toor, but his occupations and interests reflect his dedication to sustainability. Mr. Ruzzin worked for Eco-Cycle as well and served as its Community Outreach Director. In addition to being mayor, he also works for the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, a Boulder-based public interest organization promoting greater energy efficiency in the states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. In his spare time, he enjoys backcountry camping and skiing, canoeing, cycling, and bird watching. He has also been a volunteer with The Nature Conservancy. (Mark Ruzzin) Both Mr. Toor and Mr. Ruzzin fall into the alternative background category and their actions while elected officials parallel their backgrounds.

Boulder's city council members tend to fall mainly into the alternative category.

#### Boulder Council Members

Traditional	Alternative
Gordon Riggle	Suzy Ageton
Jack Stokes	Robin Bohannon
	Crystal Gray
	Shaun McGrath
	Andy Schultheiss
	Mayors: Will Toor, Mark Ruzzin

I will provide brief background biographies for these council members, giving evidence for why they were placed in their respective categories. Some members' backgrounds are

not obviously traditional or alternative, so when necessary I will explain why they were placed into one category or another.

Suzy Ageton has a PhD in sociology and a law degree. A law degree is neutral categorization-wise, but she utilizes her position for social activism rather than business or corporate law, and is therefore in the alternative category. She is currently in her eighth year as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) serving the needs of dependent and neglected children. She provides this service as a volunteer with Voices for Children. (Kaufman, Kevin. Email. 21 April 2005)

Robin Bohannan attended the Barnes Hospital School of Nursing and did graduate work in transpersonal psychology. She has been Boulder County's AIDS Project executive director since 2001, serves on the board of directors for Dental Aid Inc., and is chair of the Human Services Alliance, a non-profit human service provider. According to Bohannan, the majority of her work in Boulder County has been in removing service barriers through building relationships, identifying service gaps and developing services and programs for those caught in the cycle of dependency and poverty. She also adopted two children through the Boulder County Department of Social Service's Fost-Adopt Family Resource Team. (Kaufman, Kevin. Email. 21 April 2005)

Crystal Gray has a master's degree in landscape architecture. This is another degree that could be traditional, but the action she has taken with her skills places her into the alternative category. She has been the director of Parks for Adams County since 1993. Previously, she was a park and trail planner and landscape architect for Adams County. Prior to city council experience, Gray was on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Open Space Board of Trustees, Affordable Housing Alliance Board, and several other Boards. She works on open space tax measure initiatives as well. (Kaufman, Kevin. Email. 21 April 2005)

Shaun McGrath is a public policy expert whose emphasis is on environmental issues. Since 1995, McGrath has served as a senior policy expert for the bi-partisan Western Governors' Association (WGA). This group's 2004-2005 mission included 1) Protecting threatened and endangered species, 2) Examining ways to improve the Environmental Permit Process, 3) Strengthening state and federal energy policy and

systems, 4) Improving drought preparedness and ensuring western water supply and quality, and 5) Restoring and maintaining healthy forests and rangelands in the west. Since 1998, McGrath has worked for WGA's Denver office as the Program Manager for Water Policy. Prior to working at WGA, McGrath served as a policy advisor and legislative assistant to Congressman Jim Slattery (D-KS), handling environmental and conservation issues for the Congressman that came before the Energy and Commerce Committee. In this role, McGrath helped draft the Slattery/Bliley Safe Drinking Water Act Reauthorization bill in 1994, which passed the House and formed the basis for the Safe Drinking Water bill that later became law. McGrath also served as the Executive Director of the Kansas Natural Resource Council, a statewide non-profit environmental organization. (Shaun McGrath)

Andy Schultheiss procured a master's of science degree in environmental policy and worked as a legislative aid to three Republican members of the House of Representatives. He later worked for the African Wildlife Foundation in Washington, D.C., and Nairobi, Kenya, and for the National Parks Conservation Association before taking his current job as regional director for the League of Conservation Voters. (Kaufman, Kevin. Email. 21 April 2005)

Gordon Riggle is one of only two Boulder council members to fall into the traditional category. Mr. Riggle explained to me in an email his background in context of Boulder's environmental initiatives. "I have prior experience in the Navy, U.S. Senate, White House, and with Ball Aerospace in the private sector. With an MPA from the Kennedy School, I bring a background in strategic planning, policy development, and business to the city council. While I have no professional experience in the environmental field, I am an avid outdoor person, which is one of the reasons I so enjoy living in Boulder. I have no personal agenda or ideological bent on these matters. Instead, probably because of my background, I tend to approach environmental/sustainable development issues from a fact based, cost-benefit perspective." (Riggle, Gordon. Email. 2005)

Jack Stokes, the other council member with traditional background, does not have a college education and is the general manager of Liquor Mart. He is a former grocery store manager and has served on several civic and nonprofit group boards, including

Downtown Boulder Inc., the Chamber of Commerce and Community Food Share. He also served on the city and county task forces related to transportation. (Kaufman, Kevin. Email. 21 April 2005) Mr. Stokes' Food Share and transportation interests are alternative, yet I feel that as a standard small business owner, he is in the traditional category.

City manager is not an elected position, but is extremely important in the implementation of the laws created by the city council. Frank Bruno's background seems to fit perfectly with the society Boulder's elected officials attempt to create. He received his BA in environmental studies and worked for a regional public development corporation in Massachusetts. This corporation converted abandoned and vacant textile mills in the western portion of the state into new businesses. Mr. Bruno also worked in New York City and was instrumental in turning an old naval base into a new building complex. His overall focus is on reuse and redevelopment rather than the development of greenfields. (Bruno, Frank. Personal interview. 20 April 2005.)

#### Analysis of Council Members in Boulder

Education is on the y-axis and occupation is on the x-axis.

	Alternative	Neutral	Traditional
Alternative	Schultheiss		
Neutral	Bohannon, Toor, Ruzzin		Stokes
Traditional	Ageton, Gray, McGrath		Riggle

On the whole, it is not surprising that Boulder takes sustainability seriously when viewed in conjunction with the backgrounds of the city's elected officials. The vast majority of the council members and both mayors have strong environmental and social interests that carry over into their lawmaking. I interviewed Frank Bruno, Boulder's city manager about the city's sustainability. I asked him which elected officials were the most active in proposing environmental initiatives. He responded that Andy Schultheiss, Shaun McGrath, Mayor Mark Ruzzin, and former mayor Will Toor have been the most

active on this front. Robin Bohannon and Suzy Ageton are interested in these subjects, but are not leaders. Crystal Gray is active with the parks and recreation departments and open space initiatives such as the Visitor Master Plan. (Bruno, Frank. Personal interview. 20 April 2005.)

This information did not strike me as surprising. Of the elected officials in Boulder, it is the aforementioned four and Gray whose backgrounds and interests are most focused on the environment. They do not share the same categorization for education, but they all are in the alternative column for occupation. The two traditional occupation category members, Jack Stokes and Gordon Riggle, are left out of Mr. Bruno's assessment of active environmental leaders. This is evidence that council members and mayors with alternative occupations are more likely to take sustainability seriously than those with traditional occupations.

#### The Other Side of the Coin: Provo City

Provo City, Utah is not on Kent Portney's list of cities that take sustainability seriously. Provo is a business-oriented city that focuses the majority of its energy on growth and commerce. I conducted short interviews with nearly every member of the city council and it is evident that the word sustainability has not been mentioned at meetings and will not be mentioned anytime in the foreseeable future. However, just because the concept of sustainability is absent in the city does not mean that it lacks a high standard of living or quality of life.

Provo has a thriving business community and the city's efforts to cultivate this have been successful. Forbes magazine rates it the sixth best place in America for business and careers. The National Commission for Entrepreneurship rated Provo the #1 entrepreneurial city among comparable areas for most of the 1990s. Over the last fifteen years, the city has averaged 5% per year in job growth. Further, the forty mile strip between Provo and Salt Lake City was described by The Economist as the "world's second biggest swathe of software and computer engineering firms after California's Silicone Valley". Sperling's Best Places rated Provo the #1 least stressful city and Farmers Insurance rated it the #1 safest place in America. (Media Recognition) Most of

these ratings stem from Provo's price of labor, energy, taxes, office space, crime rates, number of college graduates, advanced degree holders, and housing costs. Median family income is \$50,400 and average wage increases have outpaced inflation for the seventh year in a row. (Provo Demographic Profile) Like Boulder, the city also has beautiful natural surroundings and mountain recreation opportunities.

### Sustainability Characteristics in Provo City

Provo pursues programs that fall into sustainable categories, yet the breadth and attention it gives to these programs reveals that taking sustainability seriously is not at the root of the initiatives. Often, pursuit of sustainability programs occurs not for proactive reasons, but in response to pollution, degradation, or other incentives. In Provo's case, having a clean and pretty city is amenable to attracting business.

### Sustainability Issues and Projects in Provo City:

- 1) Parks and Recreation. This is one of Provo City's best features. The city has thirty-two listed parks and trailheads and many of these parks are in the city center.

	Neighborhood Parks	Community Parks	Special Use/Regional
Acres	84	196	Many hundreds
# of Parks	16	16	Dozens of parks, trailheads, gun ranges, etc
Proposed Parks	7 parks/42 acres	5 parks/ 295 acres	

### (Park Amenities)

There are a plethora of outdoor opportunities easily accessible from the city, including hiking, biking, camping, rafting, etc. The city also has a disk golf course.

- 2) Volunteering and Community. Provo City has a building that acts as its Teen Center and Community Center. There are a variety of ongoing community volunteer projects ranging from park cleanups to painting to reading projects that saved the city \$1,175,660 last year. (Living in Provo) The city also planted 1,920 trees throughout the city over the last year and provided another 520 to homeowners to reduce energy consumption and cooling costs. (2004 State of the City)
- 3) Water Conservation. The city website speaks of conservation and has recommendations on how to do so, but has no conservation laws. Quoting the website, “Utah is a very dry state. Yet we all want our lush landscapes and green lawns. A sad fact is that we tend to over-water our landscapes by 20-50%”. The city acknowledges the problem, but actively does little to remedy it. (Water Conservation Tips)
- 4) Water Quality. The city’s drinking water comes from local springs and is considered very clean. The city has an accessible website detailing contaminants and ways for citizens to act if there are problems. However, according to an interview with council member Cindy Richards, Provo takes for granted its clean water. There are no attempts to treat wastewater or to reuse it for watering lawns or for other non-potable uses. According to her, it would be “more expensive to treat the water, so they use potable water for everything”. (Richards, Cindy. Personal interview. 15 April 2005)

Utah Lake is another controversial water issue in Provo City. Throughout the area’s history, many towns have dumped their waste into the lake. That practice has since stopped, but the lake is still damaged. Water quality has deteriorated for several reasons. According to the Environmental Protection Specialist from the Provo Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation, industrial developments around the lake and water diversions from the Provo River have had negative impacts. These water diversions are used for some of the water needs of Provo. It is evident, therefore, that the decision to not treat wastewater is aiding the deterioration of Utah lake. There is an endangered fish species, the

June Sucker, in the lake as well. The deteriorating lake conditions coupled with an influx of non-native species such as carp are further endangering its existence. These carp are overwhelming the lake in terms of biomass. I will discuss these problems further in context with elected officials' backgrounds later.

- 5) Energy. The city used to operate a geothermal facility, but recently sold it to the private sector. It receives most of its power from coal and hydroelectricity.
- 6) Brownfields. Provo has recently begun redevelopment of the large Ironton site that was remediated by the previous owner, USX. A parkway will be built through the site.
- 7) Preservation. The Rock Canyon case created public outcry in Provo. Rock Canyon is considered a local natural wonder and is located near the center city. It was privately owned and the proprietors began drilling for minerals. The public outcry caused the city to file a lawsuit against the drillers and succeeded in having the drilling ceased. Provo is currently purchasing half of Rock Canyon and is demanding restoration for the remaining portion. (2004 State of the City)
- 8) Recycling. The city has an active recycling program. Households are charged \$5 per month for curbside recycling, \$5 per month for yard waste and there is a "Green Waste" recycling program. Green waste is composed of grass, tree limbs, trimmings, leaves, etc. This waste is converted into compost that can be purchased by citizens. The city also implemented a "Triple Play Program" to encourage Provo residents to recycle yard waste, paper, and plastic goods. The program involved the introduction of curbside recycling of paper, cardboard, and plastics. (2004 State of the City)
- 9) Intermodal Study. Several years ago, Provo City planned an intermodal station that could develop into a commuter rail between Provo and Salt Lake City. The plan was not formally adopted, and no ordinances or zone changes were put into place as a result of the plan. It also proposed new commercial and new transit-oriented, residential/commercial/mixed-use development in place of the poorly utilized commercial and industrial properties and the older one-family and multiple-family housing that currently exist. The Finding of No Significant

Impact (FONSI) for the intermodal station Environmental Assessment (EA) expired nearly two years ago. The Utah Transit Authority's property acquisition and current plans for commuter rail, a heavy rail system, and other transit options will necessitate a new EA, as a larger and more accessible site will be needed for the station than previously anticipated. A commuter rail system is expected to be about 10 to 12 years out for Provo. (Yeckes, Jan. Email. 2005)

#### Background of Provo City's Elected Officials

Traditional	Alternative
Turley	
Dayton	
Johnson	
Sandstrom	
Richards	
Knecht	
Warner	
Mayor: Billings	

Provo City's current mayor, Lewis K. Billings is a good example of city's business-oriented focus. Mr. Billings attended BYU and studied chemical engineering and business, but did not receive a degree. He has worked in several different businesses and was President of IDC, an investment partnership that specialized in leasing facilities for small and medium sized businesses. Before joining IDC in December of 1983, Mr. Billings was Senior Executive Vice President and General Manager of CalDisk, a manufacturer and worldwide supplier of rotating memory storage products for computer applications. An active participant in the Republican Party, Mayor Billings has been a delegate to four Republican National Conventions and was a member of the electoral college for the State of Utah in 2000. He was also on the Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, on the Board of Directors of the Utah Municipal Power Agency, and has been a member of the Utah County Clean Air Commission, the American Public Power Association's Policy Boards National

Legislative Policy Council, and the United States Conference of Mayor's Standing Committee on Energy and Environment. In his free time, he raises horses. (Meet the Mayor) Mr. Billings' education falls into the neutral category and occupation falls into the traditional category.

Midge Johnson went to BYU for three years and did not graduate. She is a homemaker and is the Land Use Chair. She has had many different jobs; she has been an image consultant, worked in the education field, been a member of the chamber of commerce, worked for a radio show and in the real estate field. She considers herself an entrepreneur and currently owns a preschool. Ms. Johnson is the Economic Development Committee Chair and is on the Land Use Committee. (Johnson, Midge. Personal interview. 15 April 2005)

Paul Warner is also on the Land Use Committee. He studied to become a minister and is a former chaplain at BYU. He was the chaplain for non-Mormon students there, who compose approximately 2-3% of the student body. Mr. Warner is Chair of the Energy Committee and the Parks and Recreation Vice Chair.

Barbara Sandstrom is a high school graduate. She spent a couple of years at a college/trade technical school at UVSC in Provo. UVSC is the other college in Provo and has a little over 20,000 students. Mrs. Sandstrom is a former secretary and currently considers herself a homemaker. She is on the Land Use Committee and the Energy Committee. (Sandstrom, Barbara. Personal interview. 15 April 2005)

Cindy Richards graduated from BYU with a BS in social psychology. She has been a consultant in real estate and a secondary school teacher. She was part of the Recycling Committee ten years ago, but said that there was very little political or public will for it in Provo. She grew up in Palo Alto, CA and believes that she received a more liberal education than most of her contemporaries in Provo. She is the Assistant Land Use Chair. (Richards, Cindy. Personal interview. 15 April 2005)

Dave Knecht studied electronics at BYU. For the last twenty years, he has worked for local church organizations as a service technician. He works in various construction fields. He is on the Land Use Committee.

Cynthia Dayton grew up in New Jersey and received her BA and postgraduate education in elementary education. She tutors students in Spanish, English, and math. She also teaches violin. Ms. Dayton has been involved in school district issues and communication enhancement opportunities for businesses. She attempts to participate in local politics at the grassroots level. (Dayton, Cynthia. Personal interview. 15 April 2005)

Steve Turley is a housing developer in Provo City. I was unable to discover his education. He is the Chair of the Bike Path Committee, and member of the Economic Development and Parks and Recreation Committees. Because Mr. Turley is a housing developer, I questioned him as to whether or not Provo has green building codes. He replied, "No, we've basically left it up to the industry to decide what is safe and efficient. People in Provo are interested in saving energy, but there is no law requiring it". (Turley, Steve. Personal interview. 15 April 2005)

#### Analysis of Council Members in Provo City

Education is on the y-axis and occupation is on the x-axis.

	Alternative	Neutral	Traditional
Alternative			Richards
Neutral			Turley, Dayton, Johnson, Sandstrom, Billings
Traditional			Knecht, Warner

None of the elected officials in Provo City have or had occupations that fall into the alternative category. Their occupational categorization is entirely traditional and there is some variation in education. For three of the elected officials, including the mayor, I was unable to categorize their education because they did not receive college

educations. They, and Mr. Turley whose education is unknown, I placed in the neutral education category. Mr. Knecht, trained in electronics, and Mr. Warner, trained as a minister, are the only officials with traditional educations. More importantly Ms. Richards is the only elected official in Provo whose education falls into the alternative category. However, her occupations are still traditional.

I asked the environmental reporter of Provo's Daily Herald which members of the council engage in environmental issues. He replied simply, "None of them". (Warnok, Caleb. Personal interview. 20 April 2005) With this answer in mind, I asked Ms. Richards why it is that Provo does not take sustainability issues seriously. She responded that Provo is a very conservative community and that most people believe that environmental issues belong to liberals. (Richards, Cindy. Personal interview. 15 April 2005) I asked Ms. Dayton why environmental issues are not a top priority in Provo. She said that such issues are not a top priority because they are easier to solve than problems like "gridlock on freeways" and "exploding populations". (Dayton, Cynthia. Personal interview. 15 April 2005) Ms. Dayton's response elucidates that the concept of sustainable development, which includes both transportation and population planning, is not prevalent in Provo City.

### Religion and Land Ethics

Analysis of the two cities land use plans is very telling. With the land remaining in the cities' boundaries, what do they intend to do with it? It is evident from Boulder's open space initiatives that the city intends to set strict size limits on its population by ringing the city with open space. This allows for recreation activities and other environmental benefits. Provo is currently home to a little over 110,000 people and has plans to grow. According to an interview with Mayor Billings, he would not be surprised if the city's population ended up around 200,000. The open space available in Provo will be used for homes, businesses, and city infrastructure. Mayor Billings also said, "Just outside the city we have the Rocky Mountains, which are one of America's greatest open spaces, so we don't really see the need to set aside the little land we can actually use". (Billings, Lewis. Personal interview. 2 May 2005)

Considering that both cities are surrounded by similar natural resources, why do they not share similar ideas about the land? It appears that Boulder sees itself in a role of environmental stewardship. The city equates a healthy environment with high quality of life. Provo City sees itself in more of a role of dominance than stewardship. If there are resources to be utilized and people needing to utilize them, then why not allow them to use the land for man's benefit? I believe it is possible the Mormon religion plays a role in Provo's eschewing of conservation ethic. Much of the population in Provo City is Mormon. The Church of the Latter Day Saints does not officially have any opinion regarding the environment, but Mormons culturally have had a long history of interaction with the environment. In the early days of the Church, Joseph Smith and later Brigham Young, were forced to move their people constantly west. At each stop, they were harassed and hounded. They finally settled near Salt Lake because it was desert and unwanted by others. The Mormons therefore had to dominate and subdue the land in order to survive. Today, Mormons no longer scrape by, but the tradition of domination of the land is still strong.

*Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart.*  
—*The Doctrine and Covenants, 59:18*

Bill McKibben remarked in his 1989 book, The End of Nature, that “Mormons have made a great project of subduing nature, erecting some towns in places so barren and dry and steep that only missionary zeal to conquer the wild could be the motivation.”

There have been movements recently among members of the LDS to embrace a conservation ethic, but they represent a small percentage of Mormons. Further, according to the Church owned Deseret Morning News, 85% of active church members associate themselves with the Republican Party. To put this in perspective, LDS claims 73% of the population in Utah. In Utah, the governor and the entire congressional delegation are Mormon. (Winters, Rosemary) Many neighboring states have Mormon delegates as well. While there are notable exceptions — among them, Utah Rep. Jim Matheson, Nevada Sen. Harry Reid and New Mexico Rep. Tom Udall, all Democrats — most of the Mormon delegates are outspoken environmental critics. One delegate, Utah's Jim Hansen, is virulently anti-environment. Hansen, a conservative Republican and

former Mormon bishop, vigorously opposed wilderness protection in Utah during his 10 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. He frequently referred to endangered species in the Colorado River, such as the Colorado pikeminnow, as “trash fish.” He even promoted a “Human Protection Act,” which would have protected people from overbearing endangered species. Hansen’s opinion of environmental protection parallels that of Provo City’s population according to the Daily Herald environmental reporter. I asked him why he thought people in Provo are not concerned about the environment. He replied, “For the whole state, not just Provo, it is not a lack of concern; it is an abject and outspoken hatred of environmental concerns and liberals.” (Warnok, Caleb. Personal interview. 20 April 2005)

Hansen’s derision of the endangered pikeminnow parallels Provo City’s opinion of their endangered June Sucker. The same reporter from Provo’s newspaper described to me the city council’s opinion of the fish and Utah Lake: “There is almost no genuine concern for the lake.” He continued to explain how every member of the council has spoken out against saving the fish because it would be a “waste of money”. “The majority of the population feels the same way.” (Warnok, Caleb. Personal interview. 20 April 2005) I asked Provo’s land use chairperson Midge Johnson if environmental issues play a significant role in the city. Her first answer was that the city and its population have a dominant religion that consumes much of their time and that those who care for the environment have little time to act in its defense. (Johnson, Midge. Personal interview. 15 April 2005) It is evident that regardless of whether Mormonism is inherently biased against the environment, its practitioners’ culture and ideology do not promote a conservation ethic. I made a scatter plot graph with the variables 1) Sustainability Index and 2) Percent Christian, using Kent Portney’s sustainable cities data set. The data shows that among the cities in the set, those cities that have a higher percentage of Christians tend to take sustainability less seriously. See graph #1 on next page.

It is worth noting that all of the female council members in Provo are stay-at-home mothers and most provide homemaker as their current profession. Some of Boulder’s female council members are homemakers, but do not list homemaker as their current occupation; most of them have full time jobs. I did not originally mean for the

traditional category to represent traditional family values, however, such distinction may be relevant in Provo City's case. Maintaining the classic family structure is a priority of many women in Provo. This is an occupation, an interest, and even an education. Such family values are undoubtedly instilled in women who grow up in and around Provo. Cities that have traditional family values may be less likely to pursue sustainability than those with more liberal, or alternative, family values.

However, an in depth comparison of heavily religious communities and their relation to sustainability is beyond the scope of my hypothesis and my research data. I will leave this analysis for another paper.

### Implications

Both Provo City and Boulder have a high quality of life, yet they pursue this goal in divergent ways. Provo City has encouraged growth and is continuing to expand rapidly through traditional economic markets. Boulder has actively limited its growth and made sure that the growth that does occur happens in a strategic and planned manner. My interview with city manager Frank Bruno revealed insight into these quality of life issues. Boulder residents like preserving open space and conserving resources. However, this plan of action has hindered their economic vitality. Recently, Boulder has lost 20% of its sales and use tax revenue. This is significant because these taxes, and not property taxes, are the main sources of city revenue in Colorado. A nearby town, Broomfield, opened a new massive shopping facility that has taken business away from local stores. Boulder has had opportunities to make similar new shopping areas and expand, but chose not to. Hindsight being what it is, it may have been wiser to pursue economic development to minimize the impact of Broomfield's expansion. Nonetheless, Boulder continues to purchase surrounding lands and has no intention of changing its open space plans. (Bruno, Frank. Personal interview. 20 April 2005)

Provo City has several interesting internal struggles occurring. Council members Richards and Dayton told me that the city was nearing buildout. Buildout is the term used when a city has reached its maximum size potential. However, mayor Billings sees no reason for the city to stop growing. It is his intention to purchase and expand into nearby open lands. The council members made no mention of this to me and I do not

think that they even know of his intention. I am curious to see if Provo maintains its current population or expands to Billings' prophesized 200,000.

The rapid expansion of Provo City has not been without repercussions. Provo's downtown area has been declining economically as of late. This is due in part to air pollution problems in the downtown. The city has been paying fines for violating EPA air quality standards. Provo's mobile community exacerbates this problem. Physical transportation aside, the fact that the city is growing rapidly means that people in the city change homes often. When there are people who actually do care about the environment, they often move before they can make any change. (Richards, Cindy. Personal interview. 15 April 2005)

#### Additional Data

I felt that additional cities were necessary to test my hypothesis, so I acquired data on the backgrounds of city council members in Seattle. Seattle is ranked #1 on Kent Portney's Index of Sustainable Cities with a 30 out of 30. (Portney, Kent, 2003) For this reason, I will not provide evidence of Seattle's sustainability initiatives, but rather backgrounds of its council members.

Mayor Greg Nickels attended college, but did not graduate. He began his public service career at age 19 with the City of Seattle. He served for eight years as legislative assistant to then city council member Norm Rice. In 1987 Mr. Nickels won a seat on the King County Council where he served for 14 years. He considers his public service accomplishments working to make government more efficient by forming Metro, protecting children from tobacco advertising, and preserving more green space. (About Mayor Gregory J. Nickels)

Jan Drago is a small business owner. She is the former owner of four Haagen-Dazs ice cream shops. She graduated from Douglas College at Rutgers University with a BA in psychology. She has also been a schoolteacher. Her area of interest is economic development.

Jim Compton received has master's degree in journalism from Columbia University. He worked as a journalist and is the creator of The Compton Report. He has done many international reports and is active in several environmental organizations. His

areas of interest are water management, environmental protection, and economic development.

Richard Conlin received his MA in political science. He is the former director of community and environment for the YMCA and his area of interest is environmental stewardship. He is the Vice Chair of the Board of Health and is Cofounder of Sustainable Seattle. Sustainable Seattle publishes the city's annual indicators project.

Nick Licata received an MA in sociology from the University of Washington. He is a former insurance broker. He is Cochair of Citizens for More Important Things; this group opposes excessive funding for sports stadiums.

Richard McIver received his BA in community development. He has worked with non-profits to revitalize disadvantaged communities and works on urban renewal plans. Mr. McIver is the former executive director of a community development non-profit group.

Tom Rasmussen has a law degree from Valparaiso University. He has served on the board of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a human rights and social justice organization. He also works for a statewide gay rights group called Privacy First. Mr. Rasmussen also works to save Seattle's greenbelts and create parks.

Peter Steinbrueck earned a master's degree in architecture. He is dedicated to improving urban environments and has won the National Alliance to End Homelessness Award. He is also the former director of the city's office of senior citizens.

David Della attended Bastyr University Leadership Institute. He began his career in the labor movement helping to reform the local cannery workers union, serving as secretary-treasurer of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 37 from 1981 to 1987, and then working at the Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific as national organizer from 1987 to 1989. Mr. Della has also been director of Washington State's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs and supported programs for at-risk youth and welfare reform support for immigrant and refugee families.

Jean Godden is a former Seattle Times journalist. Her areas of interest are the monorail, viaduct replacement, and the Seattle City Light rate review.

### Analysis of Council Members in Seattle

Education is on the y-axis and occupation is on the x-axis.

	Alternative	Neutral	Traditional
Alternative	McIver		Licata
Neutral	Conlin, Della	Compton, Godden, Nickels	Drago
Traditional	Rasmussen, Steinbrueck		

Council members Compton, Godden, and mayor Nickels fall into the completely neutral background category. I believe journalism, Mr. Compton and Ms. Godden's professions, can be either alternative or traditional depending on their area of interest and for whom they work. As it turns out, Compton focuses on social justice issues and therefore is categorized alternative. I could not discover Ms. Godden's area of journalistic interest, so I will leave her in the neutral category. Mayor Nickels is a lifelong public servant, so I will use his accomplishments as a civil servant to categorize him as far as occupation is concerned. He is a nationally recognized advocate for transportation and was a key leader in pushing for voter approval of a light rail system to serve Seattle. This and his dedication to preserving green space places him in the alternative category.

After evaluating the multivariable chart, I placed each council member into one of the three categories below.

Alternative	Traditional
McIver	Drago
Conlin	Licata
Rasmussen	
Steinbrueck	
Compton	
Mayor: Nickels	

Seattle, a city ranked highly for taking sustainability seriously, appears to have more council members whose backgrounds are categorized as alternative than as traditional.

### Conclusions and Areas for Improvement

According to my research, it appears that cities whose elected officials have alternative backgrounds are more likely to take sustainability seriously than cities whose elected officials have traditional backgrounds. However, Provo City and Boulder are extreme examples in this field of research. Provo City and Boulder have, at their cores, two dichotomous ideas about the direction of their respective cities. Provo desires growth and the expansion of business. Continued growth, in the short run at least, assures new jobs and new investments. These in turn boost the city's tax base and reputation. Boulder, on the other hand, has pursued measures to curtail growth; Boulder focuses its resources on quality of life and sustainable development.

The analysis of Provo City and Boulder proves to be very black and white. Boulder is full of officials with alternative backgrounds and Provo City is full of officials with traditional backgrounds. I did not realize it when I started, but these two focus cities are practically tailor-made for my hypothesis. Seattle provides additional evidence that cities that take sustainability seriously are more likely to have elected officials with alternative backgrounds. It also supplies supplementary data with which to refine my categorization chart. Further, Seattle has council members with more ambiguous backgrounds than the council members of Provo City and Boulder. Occupations such as journalist and civil servant can be construed in many lights depending on the individual's interests. Undoubtedly, as I analyze additional cities, I will encounter many more neutral educations and occupations that will serve to improve my categorization technique.

I feel that it would have been valuable to analyze the city council members of another northwestern city that does not take sustainability seriously. I believe that Provo's religious leanings may not have made it the best focus city. Its particular leanings are not representative of most cities in America, regardless of whether or not they take sustainability seriously. Nevertheless, Provo City did provide insight into the religious environmental rationalization that may vary across faiths. It may prove worthwhile to repeat this study among various cities of strong religious faiths.

It is only through applying my hypothesis to additional cities that a wider trend will become apparent. I believe that this hypothesis has the potential to provide valuable

insight into the inner workings of sustainable cities. The difficulty lies in accessing the data necessary to test the hypothesis.