

City of Madison: Announces Women in Construction Week 2022 honoree Rebecca Qureishi

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Dreaded orange barrels, they're hard to miss when they pop up in your neighborhood. We also know what they mean when they show up on your street: construction is coming, work begins soon and something new will be built.

However, the work begins far before breaking ground for Traffic Engineering Division Engineering Program Specialist Rebecca Qureishi.

"When a new neighborhood is going to be built by Veridian [Homes] or any of the developers, they'll contact the City [of Madison] to figure out where they're going to put streets and lots," Qureishi said. "Then, I will design where the street lights are going to go and coordinate with Madison Gas and Electric and Alliant Energy to get them installed and to get them paid for to get them in the right spots."

Qureishi graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she earned a bachelor's degree in geography and a capstone certificate in geographic information systems (GIS).

"The data visualization [is my favorite.] You can actually physically see where everything is and lay it out properly," Qureishi said. "I know even residents like to look and see what's on their street, what's coming next or where they can find things... so I think everyone enjoys mapping or maps even if they don't use it day to day."

Knowing the streets of Madison comes easy to Qureishi. She not only loves working for the City as a public servant, but she's growing professionally in her own

community.

"I grew up in Madison," Qureishi said. "I did not know what I wanted to do, and I went to school for geography, which brought me to GIS and mapping. I really loved it, so I pursued that."

Qureishi started at the City of Madison as an intern, a career climb she's proud of now that she's an engineering program specialist.

"Especially in GIS, there's a lot of work," Qureishi said. "It's an up and coming technology, especially in municipalities. Looking in government and municipalities is great place to start [in the career search] as a woman. You're also helping your community, which I think is a big pull for a lot of people."

Qureishi said if women aren't aware of the career opportunities, know there are a lot of careers in GIS and mapping, and there is a growing number of women in the industry ready to welcome others.

"I think it's important to know that there are already women there," Qureishi said. "It can be really intimidating if you're the only woman — especially if you're a younger woman around a lot of men."

Qureishi said one of the biggest things she's learned since working in the GIS construction industry is to stand firm and "learn to push for the respect you deserve."

"Don't be afraid to assert your own opinions, even if they're different than the rest of the people in your work group, it's OK to say if you disagree," Qureishi said. "And you don't have to say, 'sorry' before you say your opinion."

Just about everyone has an opinion on the orange barrels that go with road construction, but one thing's for certain we can all agree on: safety the barrels and street lights provide are necessary, thanks to someone breaking ground for other women, before breaking ground on your street: Qureishi.

[The City of Madison is highlighting the work of five women during National Women in Construction Week March 6-12, 2022.](#)