

Urban GIS finds itself in a great position with the Tollway

The Illinois Tollway has consistently encouraged Disadvantaged/Minority/Women Business Enterprises to compete for professional services contracts.

Among the firms responding to the call is Chicago-based Urban GIS, Inc., a minority owned consultancy that provides Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and urban planning solutions.



Urban GIS Founder Keith A. Searles

Urban GIS was awarded a contract in February to become the prime contractor on a project to provide technical support for the Tollway's Infrastructure Management System for 2009-2011. Its subcontractor is Patrick Engineering, Inc.

It's an important project because the Infrastructure Management System manages and tracks the physical inventory and construction status of Tollway facilities and assets, including GIS.

Under the contract, Urban GIS services include data conversion, data management, technical writing, as well as mapping and custom application development for overweight truck permitting.

It's not the first time Urban GIS has provided services to the Tollway. In 1996, Urban GIS founder and President Keith A. Searles was hired by Patrick Engineering after graduating from the University of Illinois with a B.S. in Civil Engineering – Structural Engineering/Geotechnical Engineering.

Keith was assigned to work as a project manager on Tollway projects, including a feasibility study on the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88) and design of the Tri-State Tollway (I-294) Willow Road Interchange.

While using an antiquated and time-consuming microfiche system to obtain plan room material, Keith identified a need for system improvement.

He used his technical skills to help develop an online application in which items could be accessed using Adobe Reader, thus reducing the need for the

Construction Manager Procedures Review Session

On Friday, May 15, from 1 to 3 p.m., the Tollway is conducting a review of documentation requirements for all construction management firms currently working on Tollway contracts. Detailed information will be provided to all consulting firms currently under contract with the Tollway.

project managers' presence in the office and the cost to the Tollway.

That experience was influential in Keith's decision to transition from engineering to technology. In 2007, Keith established Urban GIS.

In addition to services previously mentioned, he and his staff of five certified professionals also provide technical training, research, project management, design support services for public and private development projects.

With an understanding of both engineering and Geographic Information Systems, Keith's unique combination of skills has enabled him to position Urban GIS to penetrate both public and private markets.

His clients include local, state and federal government agencies, as well as Fortune 500 companies, banks and utility companies.

"My career focus is to apply the engineering knowledge and understanding of engineering systems, and then utilize technology to enhance them," he said.

Fall 2008 Professional Services Bulletin Results

- 28% of the prime contractors selected were of diverse ethnicity.
- 22% of selections proposed a mentor/protégé relationship.
- 61% of selections exceeded the minimum 20% D/M/WBE goal.

Tutoring sessions pave way for career advancement

One way ECP candidates can advance their careers in the construction trades is by taking advantage of tutoring and training opportunities offered by contractors and unions.

Kristina "Nina" Olszanski is one of 34 current and potential Quality Control inspectors who participated in a recent tutoring session conducted by Allison Reeves, Lenny Haken and Jeff Jackson of Plote Construction, Inc., and hosted by the Illinois Tollway.



Kristina Olszanski

The March 19-20 tutoring sessions were designed to help QC inspectors obtain Concrete Level I Technician Certification. This

certification verifies that the inspector has the knowledge and ability to properly perform, record, and report the results of basic laboratory procedures for aggregates and concrete.

After completing the tutoring sessions, Nina was hired by Plote and enrolled in the Concrete Level 1 Technician course conducted by the Chicagoland Laborers District Council Training & Apprenticeship Fund and Lakeland College.

She passed the course, becoming one of 16 ECP candidates to receive certification. Nina says that she's grateful for the many opportunities she has had since becoming an ECP candidate.

She has always loved construction work and considers herself fortunate to have a fulfilling job as a QC inspector. "I still can't believe it when I pull up to the site with my safety gear on," she said. "I can finally see myself in a career I enjoy."

Diversity events calendar

May 4, 2009

5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Diversity Networking Session

Cicero Community Center

2250 S. 49th Ave.

Cicero, Ill. 60804

June 11, 2009

10:00 a.m. - Noon

ECP Quarterly Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting

2700 Ogden Ave. – 3rd Floor Board Room

Downers Grove, Ill. 60515

SAVE the DATE – December 1, 2009

13th Annual Transportation Symposium and Business Exchange

Chicago Hilton and Towers

Where is he now? Juan Rivera, 1st candidate hired in ECP

In November 2005, Juan Rivera became the first Earned Credit Program candidate to be hired by a contractor. Four years later, he remains gainfully employed and the first ECP candidate to graduate to Journeyman Level status.



Juan Rivera

Juan was hired by G.F. Fence, Guardrail & Signage, which then sponsored him into the ornamental ironworker union. He was referred to the ECP by a street ministry organization in Humboldt Park.

He was expecting his first child and didn't have steady work. He knew it was time to make some changes in

his life. "I needed to find a career and make a better life for my family," he said.

In 2007, Juan was featured in the second issue of the ECP Newsletter for generating more than \$10,000 in credits for G.F. Fence, Guardrail, & Signage. To date, Juan has now

earned more than \$50,000 worth of ECP credits for his employer. Juan also paved the way for nine other ECP candidates to be hired by G.F. Fence, Guardrail & Signage. The company used those credits generated by Juan to successfully bid on Tollway contracts.

"It's about finding the right people, teaching them our way of doing things, and then growing them within our company," said Randy Farmer, G.F. Fence, Guardrail, & Signage's executive vice president. "The ECP is a great source for finding career-minded people who are motivated to succeed in the construction industry."

Stephanie Stephens, Illinois Tollway general manager of diversity, said, "This is what the ECP is designed to do – get people sponsored into the union and carry them through to a career in the skilled trades, and to provide contractors that utilize the program an advantage at bid time."

Juan's son is now 4 years old and is in private school. He is planning to purchase a house next year. "Being part of the G.F.S. family has taught me so much about working hard and being responsible. And I've really gotten to know the highways of Illinois. I love what I do and am so thankful that they gave me a chance."



Start Today!

For more information on any Diversity Program send an email to dbe@getipass.com, visit the Web site, or call 630-241-6800

