

BEST PRACTICES

TIDINESS

Judges' Suggestions

- Scout troops, school children, prisoners, and those assigned to community service can help with cleanup efforts.
- Support adopt-a-spot programs for picking up litter. Recognize volunteers with signs at strategic places.
- Community-wide cleanup days should be held several times each year with prizes and incentives.
- Cemeteries should have designated cleanup days to remove worn and faded decorations.
- Pay attention to signage. It should be clean, graffiti free, and grouped attractively when possible to avoid sign clutter.
- Consider signage with a common theme that would carry throughout the city. This should incorporate the street signs, directional signs, and points of interest.
- Paint curbs a color to indicate no parking to reduce the number of signs.
- Prevent weeds from growing in the streets to improve tidiness and storm water drainage.
- Control of geese will help with tidiness.
- Encourage home composting of leaves to reduce litter and curbside pickup expense.
- Weeds in sidewalks, curbs, and gutters can be removed by pressure washing or steam.
- Dumpsters can be screened from view.
- Standardize signage for a more unified and orderly look.
- Work with railroads to assure that their rights-of-way are neatly maintained and that trash is picked up there.
- When funding for programs has been cut back, community organizations, businesses, or individuals can be recruited to play a key role in creating and implementing clean-up and maintenance programs in their neighborhoods.
- When budgets allow and always for new developments, put utilities underground.
- Consider sprucing up trash receptacles with artwork of some type (i.e., tiles that represent the culture of your community, paintings, etc.). Match trash receptacle style to complement the local architecture.
- Use a portion of tax proceeds from outlying "big box" stores on "downtown" beautification or redevelopment, perhaps based on sales (Tax Increase Financing).
- As the city continues to expand, consider creating additional dog areas, with sections to segregate small and large dogs.

- Consider ordinances for those businesses unwilling to comply with voluntary plantings, similar to the new residential standards.
- To prevent visual blight, consider an ordinance requiring abandoned gas stations to be returned to turf or parkland if they are abandoned for six months or longer.
- Consider a “beautiful backside pride” policy for commercial areas, to promote back alleys and rears of buildings to be as clean, painted, and kept up as the fronts.
- Investigate “Rubber Sidewalks” (www.rubbersidewalks.com) to protect tree roots and possibly save on tree removals as part of sidewalk installations and renovations.
- Consider implementing sign ordinances, especially for commercial and industrial areas.
- Study the origin of most litter, if not known already, and target persons responsible with anti-litter and recycling information. This might include public service announcements and direct market materials for locals, and signage for visitors. Proactive efforts to reduce litter can save many hours of labor in picking it up.
- Check all murals and remove graffiti to make it clear that this won’t be allowed. Youth at risk creating such murals might be participants in a “graffiti removal team” to ensure they stay clean.
- Consider creating murals to hide blank walls or areas under construction.
- Consider an ordinance prohibiting long-term parking of trailers, boats, and temporary use vehicles on roads and road shoulders.
- Buildings can be power washed to improve their appearance.
- Big box and mall parking lots should be frequently cleaned with a street sweeper. If the city already owns such a machine, it could charge stores to sweep their parking lots.
- Collect used paint and make it available to those who cannot afford to purchase it. Perhaps scouts or service groups could use it to paint homes to improve the appearance of a neighborhood.
- Make your own cleaning products using vinegar, baking soda and lemon juice.

TIDINESS – Population 20,001 – 50,000

Bartlett, TN – 2003, 2004, 2005

- Tidiness is a “life style” and not the result of a pre-visit cleanup. They know that a clean city is a safe city.
- A “no smoking” initiative in the parks has helped eliminate a particularly offensive form of litter—cigarette butts and discarded packaging.
- The Adopt-a-Park program is typified by the Ellendale Park being supervised by the Shelby Youth Ellendale Bears. The park had been taken over from the County after it fell into disrepair. Plans include creation of a new handicap accessible children’s playground there with citizen participation.
- A city ordinance establishes minimum standards for maintenance, condition and upkeep of residential and non-residential areas.

Glen Ellyn, IL – 2002

- The Chamber of Commerce created a committee to address the appearance of the commercial district and has planted several parking areas and cleaned up alleys.

Sandusky, OH – 2002, 2003, 2004*

- 90% of highways are adopted for cleanup.
- In 2002, 150 people participated in a city-wide cleanup and collected 8400 pounds of trash.
- The “We Noticed” program for residents and businesses, recognizes exceptional maintenance, beautification, and floral displays.
- Eight service clubs work towards a common goal of replacing old and worn out signage.
- “Waterfront Watchdogs” volunteer to pick up trash daily along all of the waterfront areas.

Tupelo, MS – 2003

- Signs may be put up 90 days in advance of an event (i.e., election) but not in the right of way; and they must be removed the day following the event or the city will confiscate the signs. Yard sale signs are no problem since there is a \$25 permit required and if signs are not removed, fines are \$50.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORT

Judges’ Suggestions

- Mowing of storm water retention basins could be reduced to one or twice a season, allowing wildflowers and natural grasses to succeed. Some retention ponds might be slightly modified to hold water and provide a suitable habitat for birds and waterfowl. Frogs and pollywogs will tend to the mosquitoes. Willows and cattails provide excellent bird habitat and further act as sponges and filters for soaking up runoff.
- Consider purchasing a glass grinder to convert clear glass once it has been stripped of all labels and washed to crush the glass fine enough to be a dust or “glass bead.” The glass bead can be incorporated in the wet road marking, curb marking or wood carved signs to create a better reflective sign. The remainder could be packaged and sold to other communities nationwide.
- Use energy efficient light bulbs throughout the city parks and buildings.
- Instead of spending big bucks on bottled water, drink the stuff that comes from your faucet. It takes a lot of oil to make and ship those bottles, and once they’re empty, most wind up in landfills or as litter. If you’re concerned about tap water quality, buy and use a water filter.
- One environmental practice that more and more cities and school systems are going to is the use of bio-diesel products in their diesel-powered vehicles. The promise of soy-diesel is a potential reduction in our dependency on fossil fuels and a possible boon to farmers.
- People should be discouraged from blowing grass clippings into the street where they may end up in the sewer.
- Provide recycling receptacles in public areas.
- ³ Provide recycling information on the city web site, and include the URL on utility bills.

- Solicit opportunities to introduce environmental awareness programs into the local schools.
- Methane gas from landfills can be used as an alternative energy source.
- Count cars entering the parks, playgrounds and beaches to see their daily usage and help in pinpointing where more money, time and effort should be spent in maintenance, enhancement, and beautification. Home owners should be encouraged to use mulching lawn mowers so that less yard waste is created and the need for disposal by Public Works reduced.
- Include gardening and environment in elementary school curriculum.
- Expand yard waste pick-up to include summer months as well as spring and fall to encourage better maintenance of planted areas.
- Partner with county and state agencies for grant opportunities.
- Develop ordinances to control application of herbicides and pesticides. Encourage adoption of integrated pest management practices.
- Purchase and protect sensitive wetlands, forests, and wildlife habitat areas.
- Junk mail annoying and kills trees. Do yourself-and the forests-a favor by getting off the mailing lists of companies you don't support.
- Trade your old incandescent light bulbs for compact fluorescent ones. They use about 70 percent less energy than regular bulbs and last 10 times longer.
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- • Work on outreach efforts to promote a increased recycling through various media available to the city , as well as through other venues such as promotional vehicles and displays at malls, stores, and public events. School programs and educational activities brought to schools by regional recycling experts, would help train the coming generation.
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- Perhaps a Recycle Bank as developed in Philadelphia might be instituted, in which persons are rewarded for recycling with coupons from merchants, more coupons the more is recycled.
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- Use funds from sale of recycled materials to help fund education on recycling, and consider a "paper to parks" program funding floral displays in parks.
- Consider free recycling for small amounts such as 1 or 2 computers per day or week, and free waste disposal for small amounts, in order to minimize illegal dumping.
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- Recycling and waste bins should be provided in all parks and public events, and commercial developments should be required to provide such as well.
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- Educational efforts should be made through the public access television programs, website, newsletters, and flower show seminars to encourage residents to leave grass clippings on lawns through use of mulching-type mowers and proper mowing habits. Perhaps a partnership promotion between the city and local vendors of such mowers would increase the incentive and decrease the cost of these to residents. Such mowers and practices would further reduce the need for fertilizers on lawns and impact of such on surface and ground water.

- Education, through a web site or brochures or seminars, about the use of Rain Barrels would benefit the watershed. Rain Barrels are simply screened barrel shaped containers that store rainwater from rooftops. When attached to the downspout of a house, school, or business building, rain barrels catch and conserve some of the rainwater that drains from rooftops for later use.
- Create school wildlife habitat area to serve as a role model for the wider community, which should consider educational seminars on individual homes becoming certified backyard wildlife habitats (www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/).
- Provide education to youth at an early age on ecosystems and nature through a “Terrarium Project”. Nature education to the very youngest might be done as “Stroller Science.”
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM) can be widely adopted and practiced within the community. City employees might be trained in these principles through professional seminars, and in turn offer workshops for the public.
- Efforts should be made to develop both wet and dry basins. Although the use of old curbing as rip-rap is a good example of recycling, planting of some basin margins with native plants and wildflowers should be considered instead. Bioengineering techniques such as biologs (www.geosynthetics.com/coir_fiber_biologs.asp) might also be used. Biologs are a soft engineering tool used for erosion control or creating wildlife habitat. Education efforts such as on-site signage should help gain public acceptance of such a transformation and its wildlife benefits.

Coir BioLogs & Coir Mats Geotextiles:

Coir Biologs are strong yet flexible rolls made of coir web covered with coir mesh netting. They find application on lake and sea shores, stream banks and also in deserts for sand dune stabilization. Mostly they are used at sites where high exposure to waves or currents cause instability. In such applications, coir biologs blend naturally into aquatic environs.



Coir biologs help to prevent soil erosion, hold mineral and organic particles and provide a stable structure for root growth even as the logs decompose over time, leaving a deep-rooted vegetation which will act as a self maintaining erosion control system.

Available Sizes: 6” to 36” diameter by 1 meter to 6 meter length per log. Custom sizes can be manufactured, please call us.

Coir	BioLogs	IN	STOCK:
- 12” Diameter	x 3 Meter (About 10 ft.)	Length, 5.5 Lbs	/ Linear Foot
- 12” Diameter	x 3 Meter (About 10 ft.)	Length, 7.5 Lbs	/ Linear Foot

- A no-smoking policy in the sports areas might be expanded to other public municipal areas and buildings, serving as an example for homes and businesses. The vision of a smoke-free community might be the eventual goal.
- To improve the air quality of the community, as well as decreasing reliance on and use of fossil fuels, efforts to promote public transportation and fuel-efficient vehicles might be investigated. Vans and carpools might be coordinated when several people from a development work at the same area or employer, especially if outside the city. The municipal sector might once again lead by example, using bio-diesel, electric or other alternative fuels as possible.
- Develop a 5-year plan for trails, including multiuse trails for rollerblading and biking as well. Trails could connect key areas of the city, provide additional health and recreation opportunities for its citizens, as well as an attraction for non-residents.
- Ask for parent volunteers to help maintain school habitat educational sites with the children.
- Benefits to wildlife and the environment would be realized with less leaf raking and blowing and vacuuming, by allowing areas under trees to remain natural (both in parks and home landscapes).
- Provide “reuse” stations for recycling usable items; such might include a special area for items of use in home schools and by teachers.
- Provide incentives and means for homeowners and restaurants to add food wastes to compost. This might include collection for food establishments, and containers for homeowners free or at nominal cost. Lobby state legislators to change state regulations keeping the recycling of food wastes from composting facilities. Consider worm composting for homeowner food wastes.
- Consider ordinances regulating herbicide and pesticide usage; continue promotion and education on integrated pest management in landscapes.
- Institute eco-design standards for buildings incorporating green roofs, LEED certification and similar.
- Enjoy balloons but avoid releasing them into the air. These usually end up as someone else’s trash, or in rivers and wetlands where they can be deadly to animals that mistake them for natural food sources. Add a demonstration garden at the recycle center or other appropriate area on invasive plants and their alternatives.
- Work toward removing invasive exotic plants that smother the natural diversity of parks.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORT – Population 20,001 – 50,000

Annapolis, MD – 2002

- • Yard waste is collected, composted and used to refurbish park shrubbery beds and is offered free to all residents.
- The city does not use herbicides or pesticides.

Barberton, OH – 2002

- An environmental restoration program is in the works to reclaim 600 acres of “lime lakes” from the Pittsburgh Glass factory. It will result in 600 acres of rolling hills and meadows, lush green grasses, and wildflowers, and the return of wildlife and a natural pond for migrating birds. There will be hiking trails, picnic areas, and natural habitat for wildlife observation.
- The city is working on restoring the Ohio Canal in cooperation with Ohio Metropolitan Parks.

Bartlett, TN – 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

- Yard carts are used to collect recyclables.
- Mulch generated by the Utilities Department is made available to the residents free of charge.
- All Bartlett/Shelby County schools use outdoor classrooms where students get hands-on experience and intimate acquaintance with nature.
- The fire station has installed a martin house so that the birds can help with mosquito control.
- Exemplary maintenance of city vehicles; even the oldest ones have been painted to look like new.

Berea, OH – 2003, 2005

- The town has a small scale composting area for leaves and woodchips and makes their own soil mix for planting projects.
- Students regularly monitor water quality in streams.

Glen Ellyn, IL – 2002, 2003

- A border collie named Blue has been trained by the Goose Away organization to chase the geese off the Village Links golf course.
- Many perennials and ornamental grasses integrated into the public landscapes helps reduce the use of herbicides and pesticides.

Lake Oswego, OR – 2003*

- Bike paths are required on all new roads adding 1% to the cost.
- The purposeful lack of road curbs causes water runoff to be absorbed near the roadside and reduces the amount of storm sewer discharge. There are no curbs to make and repair at considerable cost and the lack of them gives a more hometown look.

Westlake, OH – 2002, 2005

- Retention ponds and woodlands have been incorporated into the city to create wildlife habitats.

Wheatridge, CO – 2002

- Non-potable water is used for landscape irrigation.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Judges' Suggestions

- Trained staff and students can offer horticulture tours of campuses and parks.
- Encourage a broader community involvement to showcase individual gardens encourage private and commercial opportunities and recognition of these landscapes.
- Truly effective community involvement requires that government, business and citizens all work in concert under unified leadership.
- Use abandoned rail right of ways to develop parks, trails, community gardens.
- Involve seniors to gain their expertise.
- A Volunteer/Community Service Roundtable attended by all the town's service groups can help develop ideas for increasing "hands-on" volunteerism.
- A Volunteer Leadership Workshop may be helpful in developing new and current volunteers and leaders.
- Offer a day long program to educate the public and increase their knowledge base in areas such as soil and site selection, home composting; cultural practices, pruning techniques, and other related topics to enhance their horticulture skills. Putting the knowledge to work would encourage further participation in the neighborhood beautification efforts.
- Find businesses with related interests and encourage their help and sponsorship.
- Provide incentives for participation, be generous with awards.
- Solicit businesses to have their names on America in Bloom or other decorative banners. This helps support beautification programs and shows community spirit.
- Various volunteer and civic groups need to discover each other so they might enhance their own changes for success by working collectively to improve the whole. The city can develop a consolidated list of such groups as a resource.
- Hire summer interns to serve as "ambassadors" in the downtown area so that visitors feel welcome. These people can also sweep sidewalks, pull weeds, and do other tasks to keep the area pleasant.
- As the city continues to grow, the municipal sector and volunteer groups should expand outreach through all means to engage and involve the city's newest members. Such outreach should be expanded even more to youth, instilling in them the values of such community involvement at an early age.
- The city might consider creating an art museum or center to provide opportunities for citizens in arts such as painting and handcrafts. Youth groups such as the scouts might be enlisted to enhance parks and natural areas.

- Provide opportunities for youth at risk, such as teen centers, recreation facilities, or community-based public art projects.
- • Explore starting an organization of volunteer medical professionals to provide free health care to those without insurance.
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- Some of the burden of supporting local groups by the city might be shifted to the commercial sector through increased sponsorship of programs, thus giving businesses increased visibility as well.
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- Consider a CSA (community supported agriculture) produce garden for the community and to help feed the needy.
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- Consider starting a chapter of a native plant society to promote more gardening with native species.
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- Develop marketing materials such as mini table tents promoting America in Bloom, what it is, and suggestions on how locals might be involved; leave at restaurants and businesses for customers to take away
- Provide opportunities and promote community gardening efforts involving various local ethnic populations
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- • Consider grants and organizations such as KaBOOM for additional kid-designed and totally ADA playgrounds.
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- • Further involve elementary students of other grades in education, and “ownership” such as through “penny campaigns” to help fund conservation and restoration projects.
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- Consider a part-time or full-time volunteer coordinator position with the Parks and Recreation Department who also might assist with fund-raising for such projects.
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- Involve community groups on suggestions for flower choice and design for at least some city plantings, in order to foster further pride and ownership.
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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – Population 20,001 – 50,000

Annapolis, MD – 2002

- • In the past eleven years, the “greenscapes” program has installed more than 350 community gardens, involved more than 2500 volunteers, cleaned more than 75 acres, and has planted more than 900 trees and shrubs.

Barberton, OH – 2002

- • A “Paint Your Heart Out” program provides volunteers to paint houses for the needy and for other painting projects in the town.

Bartlett, TN – 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

- Evaluation forms from past AIB involvement were shared with the various organizations and community groups and are posted on the city web site. The action plan is then prepared for the coming year.

- The annual Lawn and Garden Show provides an innovative means of widening public participation in the AIB program.
- “Bartlett – a Beautiful Place to Live” was chosen as the motto and publicized by letter to all residents encouraging them to participate.
- Promotional information on AIB was city wide via newspapers, brochures, and civic group announcements.
- The AIB committee sponsored a special beautification program giving awards in 5 categories: business, government, residential, neighborhood entrances, and churches. The awards were given July 8 by the mayor with pictures in the paper and taping for local TV cable channel.
- The city provides facilities for volunteer and civic group activities at municipal properties such as community center, parks, senior center – a nice way to integrate community pride.

Batavia, IL – 2003

- Involving youth in the planning and design of the skateboard park and linking it to the bike path is a well thought out plan to ensure the safety and well being of the youth in the community. Involvement is empowerment and a primary factor in creating civic pride.

Berea, OH – 2003, 2005

- The committee had special door hangers made up that alerted citizens that their planting handiwork and effort had been noticed by the America in Bloom committee members who went around town visiting the homes. Wording on the door hangers: “The appearance of your property is an asset to the neighborhood.”
- Berea got their community psyched for this competition. They even designed an America in Bloom Competition website, listing the eight categories to be judged. They had a backyard garden contest, a neighborhood competition and clean up days, a children’s garden contest and let it be known that the theme was “Red , White, and Blue.” As the judges entered town all the flags were raised. Many houses had flags flying, ribbons adorning posts, and red, white and blue flowers planted EVERYWHERE!
- The Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Garden Clubs, and the Red Hat Society as well as the Historical Society, Rotary Club, Shade Tree Commission, Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Arts Council all were a part in making their America in Bloom competition a community effort.

Encinitas, CA – 2003, 2005

- Quail Botanical Gardens has child-size toilets in the restrooms next to the children’s garden.

Lake Oswego, OR – 2003

- Citizens think “where can we do it” rather than “don’t know if we can do it” and it is assumed any good idea will be done by someone who volunteers.

Sandusky, OH – 2002, 2003, 2004*

- More than 90 heritage homes have been restored.

Wheatridge, CO – 2002

- The Children’s Happiness Garden is an allotment garden that features an All American Selections demonstration growing area. Plants are raised from donated seeds and the produce is given to area churches and food banks.
- Homeowners volunteer to water 56 traffic calming areas in residential neighborhoods.

HERITAGE

Judges' Suggestions

- • Start walking tours of historic districts; create brochures with maps.
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- Make audio recordings of older residents telling about the town's early days.
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- Re-use, repurpose old buildings.
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- Develop sites with historic tourism potential.
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- Improve signage for historic sites.
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- Develop brochures with maps to historic sites, walking tours, brief histories.
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- Consider designating heritage trees.
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- Encourage and help establish email listserves for individual neighborhoods or historic districts, in order to foster increased networking and interaction among residents.
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- Monthly historical articles in the newspaper would remind people of and educate them about the community's heritage.
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- Develop educational heritage programs for children and adults.
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- Develop elder hostel programs to promote travel to historic sites.
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- Develop a vision for the city that connects it with the past and future.
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- Capture heritage themes in streetscape plans, murals, and street furniture.
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- Check with state and federal resources for funding for historic preservation.
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- Offer torchlight tours of the local cemetery.
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- Give historic preservation awards recognizing successful preservation projects.
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- For the historic homes, incorporate gardens and plants of the period with educational and interpretative signage.
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- Have volunteer guides interact in classrooms and other school or youth venues to provide a setting for youth in their community and history. Consider volunteers or local college students to develop curricula and activities to increase meaning for students.
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- Involve elementary students of other grades in education, and "ownership" such as through "penny campaigns" to help fund conservation and restoration projects
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- Consider developing a heritage tree walk to correspond with the architectural tours.
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- Have models of historic buildings designed and built for sale at the visitor's center for fund-raising, perhaps one yearly, perhaps even as tree ornaments.

HERITAGE – Population 20,001 – 50,000

Glen Ellyn, IL – 2002, 2003

- The Historical Society has created a self-guided walking tour featuring 46 houses built between 1840 and 1902.

Lake Oswego, OR – 2003*

- The city has actively been purchasing open space (funded by a city bond issue) and adopted a Comprehensive Open Space Master Plan in 1999. Therefore, there is little land left to develop as residential. Strict regulations have been enacted to control teardowns or “infills” so new construction will have the same character as existing neighborhoods. The city has managed its growth over the last thirty years.

Sandusky, OH – 2002, 2003, 2004

- Efforts are made to maintain the integrity of various floral displays based on pictures on old post cards.

Westlake, OH – 2002, 2005

- To raise money for its activities, the Westlake Historical Society conducts an annual antique show and sale. Its success has helped to save several historic homes.

New Bedford, MA – 2003

- Renovations plans must be reviewed for any structure more than 50 years old.

URBAN FORESTRY

Judges' Suggestions

- • Apply to become a Tree City.
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- Use trained volunteers to help develop a tree inventory.
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- Have periodic newspaper articles on tree selection, planting, and care.
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- Celebrate Arbor Day with tree plantings.
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- If every U.S. household replaced one toilet paper roll with a roll made from recycled paper, 424,000 trees would be saved. If every household in the United States bought recycled napkins instead of virgin-fiber napkins, we could save a million trees. If the thought of recycled paper doesn't do it for you, plant a tree. The net cooling effect of one healthy tree is equivalent to 10 room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day.
- Encourage donations of memorial trees for parks and school grounds.
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- Use the services of a full time urban forester or arborist could to oversight during construction projects and planting to ensure tree protection guidelines are being followed.
- Sidewalks or trails should be required in all new developments and added as possible in older ones.

- Provide ongoing training for advisory volunteers will keep them abreast of tree needs, IPM principles, and related issues.
- Checklists are another way to get residents excited about the diversity of a natural area. Volunteers might be interested in developing a bird, flower, tree, and butterfly check list for local species.
- Regularly assess any hazard tree conditions on school properties. This service could be provided by a volunteer local arborist, or a city urban forester.
- Offer “master pruning” classes and programs to the public to increase awareness of proper pruning practices on trees and shrubs. Such could be offered by local landscape experts.
- To help fund tree plantings and maintenance, consider an Arbor Day celebration and related activities. These might include a “sleep with the trees” overnight camping experience for a donation, tree sales especially of special trees, or a tree calendar. The latter could be developed from submissions of favorite trees in the community.
- Consider an ordinance prohibiting the sale of invasive trees.
- Introduce into plantings, with concurrent education to the public, of more new species and cultivars as well as native species.
- Establish a demonstration, perhaps at the community college, of invasive trees and their alternatives, along with educational materials for the public.
- Train contracted mowing crews, as well as private firms and homeowners, on tree care to avoid “mower blight” injuring trunks from mowers and weed trimmers.
- Consider developing a heritage tree walk to correspond with the architectural tours.
- Develop a long term plan for tree plantings and replacements, if not already under consideration.
- Consider implementing ordinances concerning plantings to screen parking lots and shopping complexes.
- Provide education through seminars and various media to assure proper selection, planting, and maintenance of trees on private property.
- Publish a list of recommended trees on the city web site.
- Form a master pruners program to teach citizens about tree pruning.
- Consider using the National Arborist Association’s guidelines for tree care, removal and replacement.
- If available, use the services of the state urban forester and state land grant university, and interns from colleges.
- A tree inventory is a good insurance in a disaster and will encourage diversity rather than monoculture.

- Wood from trees that have been removed can be milled and used for community projects. Firewood can also be given away to residents.
- Develop a tree commission.
- Have contests to determine the oldest/largest tree in the city; memorialize it with a plaque.
- Educate the public about “volcano mulching” and provide classes/demonstrations/ brochures on proper mulching techniques.
- Develop an ordinance to prevent compaction of soil around trees during construction.
- Tree assessment for dollar value should be performed, including the economic value of specific pollutants (such as ozone) that trees remove, and the runoff they reduce. More tree facts and cultural details might be added to the tree tour.
- Remove dead trees as soon as they are noticed.
- Consider labeling trees in parks and public areas.
- Remove Christmas lights when not in use.
- Planting hedges with a minimum height of 36” at the street line will soften the look of a parking lot and keep it from looking so hot on a sunny day. This would help assure a pleasant well-landscaped looking feel to the businesses outside the downtown business district.
- Trees can be a part of parking lot beauty if they are carefully planted providing shade for citizens and buffering noise. Snow removal shouldn’t be a problem if the owner of the lot is required to remove the snow from the area once amounts exceed the space provided.
- Inspect trees annually and perform necessary maintenance to prevent potentially dangerous situations.

URBAN FORESTRY – Population 20,001 – 50,000

Bartlett, TN – 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

- City representatives attended the annual urban forestry association’s conference to learn more about urban forestry issues, concerns and opportunities. As a consequence, the city submitted grant proposals with the state of Tennessee for the funding of an urban forester/storm water coordinator position. The grant was approved and an urban forester/storm water coordinator, was hired.
- A citywide contest was held to name the official city tree.
- An urban forestry display and free seminars on tree planting and care were included in the lawn and garden show and over 100 tree seedlings were distributed. One of the garden center vendors gave away 25 cherrybark oaks as door prizes.

Glen Ellyn, IL – 2002, 2003

- The city arborist sends “Congratulations” letters to residents when new trees are planted or replaced on their median strip or parkway space. If the resident will take responsibility for watering for a 2 year period, a \$5 water credit is given to them each year. If the city waters the newly planted trees, gator bags are used and filled as needed for a minimum of two years.

Lake Oswego, OR – 2003*

- Tree law prevents commercial or private citizens from removing trees for construction unless they get the Community Forestry Commission approval.
- Because city policies prohibit the cutting down of trees, the city staff often moves valuable trees to other areas to enhance landscaping.

Stamford, CT – 2002

- Trained volunteers inventory and map the urban forest.

Westlake, OH – 2002, 2005

- Four hundred new trees were planted at the recreation center, including a crabapple arboretum.

Wheatridge, CO – 2002

- The town has a preferred species list which ensures that only suitable species will be used in the community.
- Topping of trees is not allowed.
- The town maintains a tree inventory to track the condition and maintenance history of each tree.
- The town has a rebate program for residents which refunds 25% of a tree purchase price from the city and allows an additional 25% discount to be taken at the time of purchase from participating nurseries.

Willoughby, OH – 2002, 2003

- A comprehensive plan has been developed to ensure proper maintenance and replacement of urban trees.

Kalamazoo, MI – 2002, 2004, 2005

- The city has completed a detailed tree inventory using a GIS–GPS system.

Modesto, CA – 2002

- Development of a street tree master plan has helped increase the tree population while reducing per unit maintenance costs. The program has demonstrated the virtues and importance of an urban forest and proven how it can be financially viable even resulting in lower claims and thereby lower insurance costs.

LANDSCAPED AREAS

Judges’ Suggestions

- Don’t prune or clip shrubbery more than necessary.
- Consider replacing some lawns with less labor–intensive groundcovers.
- Develop or update a master plan for parks construction and maintenance.

- Develop/update/enforce a greenspace/landscape ordinance.
- Provide incentives for developers to set aside greenbelts and natural habitat areas.
- Expand public planting areas to more parts of the city; consider seasonal plantings.
- Attractive gardens at schools help children learn about the benefits of plants.
- In public gardens, interpretive labelling adds another dimension to people's enjoyment of the area.
- Planting of low maintenance natives is encouraged.
- Consider attractive landscaping around signs and at gateways to the town.
- Budget for continuing horticulture/arboriculture education for parks and recreation employees.
- Encourage more diverse plant selection to include bulbs, shrubs and perennials with consideration toward the use of xeric plants to reduce maintenance issues and enhance visual aspects of various sites.
- Consider planting deer and rabbit resistant species.
- Remember to include public art in parks and commercial areas.
- Watch for compatibility of plants in landscaped areas; i.e., do they have the same light and water needs?
- Selection of shrubs for least maintenance should receive high priority.
- Natural areas under tree groups should reduce the need to rake and blow leaves.
- Consider landscaping at least one street median a year. Incorporate drip irrigation to keep the plantings in good health and save on water and labor to water. Incorporating more ornamental grasses and low maintenance perennials such as groundcovers, with the annuals for seasonal color, should reduce costs for seasonal plantings as well as maintenance in these medians.
- Adopt a street, even adopt a spot, programs might be considered in order to shift the burden and cost for street and park, even traffic island, plantings (and clean up) to individuals and groups who wish to be involved in and help their community.
- Landscape regulations may be expanded with time to include more landscape plants, herbaceous plants, and suggestions on choosing the right plant for the right location. Such education can be provided as well through various other media and activities.

- Develop standards and provide education on allowing adequate distance if possible between fences and roads or sidewalks in order to enable plantings to soften the “fortress” effect of extensive fencing. Espaliered plants such as roses, upright cultivars of plants, or vines, might be required periodically along fences where space is an issue.
- Move toward designing landscapes for sustainability, wildlife habitats and least inputs whether labor, equipment or chemicals. Such designs often include rain gardens, or green roofs on buildings and parking garages. Such areas might be as simple as choosing the right plants for the right place, to plants for wildlife and backyard habitats, to wildflower meadows or woodlands.
- Consider a competition or even seasonal shows of local and regional artist sculptures in parks.
- Consider annual tours for backyard landscapes for education and fund raising, and monthly awards or recognition for front landscapes visible from the road.
- Promote increased use of floral pots and planters downtown and in the business community
- Consider using massive planting of ornamental grasses, native shrubs, or low maintenance perennials in large areas of large medians or current turf where pedestrian use is not critical.
- Provide education to the public, and demonstrations through plantings, on eco-design principles and practices in addition to current plant selection, such as rain gardens and rain barrels, decreased fossil fuel use, organic fertilizers, composts.
- The addition of specific display gardens, such as for invasive or native shrubs, in parks and with signage would provide important education for visitors and local gardeners.
- Use berms and plantings to screen “big box” stores in the updated version of the landscape ordinance.
- On future buildings, and renovations, such as of the proposed parking garage in the 2020 vision, consider adding green roofs (such as on the parking garage in central Quebec city).
- Long term, consider planning a botanic garden or arboretum. Such would combine and bring together much of what already exists throughout the community.
- Increase the number of herbaceous perennials, especially in mass plantings.
- Mulch landscaped areas to reduce watering needs and weeds.
- Consider cultural needs and preferences when designing public landscapes.
- Train volunteers to recognize and remove weeds in public and private places.
- Consider potential areas for horticultural tourism.
- Try hosting a plant swap to save money on plants and acquire more diverse plant species.
- Provide care sheets for container plantings.
- Use solar powered fountains to aerate ponds.

- Encourage business districts to incorporate container plantings to make their spaces more attractive and inviting.
- Install soaker hoses to water floral displays.
- Use plastic baskets with rain mats for container plantings.
- When possible, avoid monoculture displays which can result in pest problems.
- Garden Clubs or even the postman may want to nominate residents' colorful landscapes as part of the "Neat Neighborhoods" program. A door hanger could be left at the residence to alert them that they are doing a fine job and that they are a candidate for viewing by the judges. A contest could be held to encourage planting.

LANDSCAPED AREAS – Population 20,001 – 50,000

Bartlett, TN – 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

- The business community and fast food franchises actively participate in landscaping their facilities.
- Parks are available or are planned within 1 ½ miles of each residence.

Sandusky, OH – 2002, 2003, 2004

- Wildlife preserves which ring the city are part of the county parks district.

LANDSCAPED AREAS – Population 50,001 – 100,000

Quincy, MA – 2004

- The mayor gave \$500 to schools for landscaping.

Reston, VA – 2003

- Forty acres of meadow are scattered throughout the community.

Stratford, CT – 2002

- Most gas stations had floral displays.

FLORAL DISPLAYS

Judges' Suggestions

- The wholesale purchase and distribution of bulbs for fall planting in the public areas would result in a great spring effect at modest cost.
- Garden plots might be developed at some of the schools that would permit children to grow flowers and vegetables and experience the delight of growing things that was once commonplace in rural communities.
- Start garden tours as fundraisers and to increase awareness of gardening.
- Recognize a "yard of the week" and feature it in the newspaper.
- The use of Soil Moist (or equivalent) in containerized plantings reduces the need for frequent watering.
- Contact wholesale bulb or flower distributors to take advantage of year-end clearances. It's a way to obtain lots of plant material at reduced cost.
- Add AIB signage to publicize the city's participation; perhaps add a sign "Another American in Bloom Project" where plantings or landscaping have been installed.
- Enlist the help of a landscape architect or garden designer to plan color schemes to assure that the right plants are selected for various environments.
- The city, residents, and service groups can partner to create and maintain floral displays.
- Businesses can be encouraged to create floral displays on their properties.
- Work with a landscape designer to develop plantings with choices appropriate to the surroundings and to the growing conditions.
- Wherever possible, install automatic irrigation systems to reduce labor costs.
- In public planting beds, consider using hardy perennials and shrubs which do not have to be replanted every year.
- In public areas, the creation of display gardens with seasonal themes can help draw people to downtown areas.
- If the town has a "planting day", consider giving away a half-flat of plants to volunteer children of low income families to plant at home after a day of learning how to plant.
- Incorporate polymer crystals into the soil to help retain moisture and reduce watering needs.
- Incorporate pre-emergent in planting beds to control weeds and reduce labor requirements
- Plant gardens that attract bees and hummingbirds. Yellow, blue and purple flowers will attract bees, while red and orange will attract hummingbirds.
- For commercial plantings, lists might be developed to assist in proper plant selection, especially if low maintenance perennials. A parks department employee might be trained to train and assist and provide floral education to both businesses and home owners.

- Consider yearly changes in annual floral choices, with signage in appropriate areas or brochures and tours to educate the public on names; utilize an advisory group in plant selection to foster “ownership”, increased public involvement, and new ideas
- Select park locations might incorporate native floral areas, with signage or educational information. As with landscape plantings in general, promote increased floral plantings, and diversity within them including through-the-season color.
- Explore the possibility of creating a healing garden adjacent to a hospital, or an ADA accessible garden in an appropriate location.
- Create period flower beds using period flowers appropriate for historic homes.
- Increase floral plantings at high traffic areas around sports facilities for public enjoyment, perhaps sponsored or maintained by local groups as garden clubs or master gardeners.
- Consider sales by groups such as scouts and school groups of spring-flowering bulbs as fund raisers.
- Through continued recognition and grants, work to further increase floral plantings at businesses, and individual use of color containers in the city or sponsorship of baskets
- Promote use of water-absorbing gels in containers and baskets to reduce watering.
- Involve community groups on suggestions for flower choice and design for at least some city plantings, in order to foster further pride and ownership.

FLORAL DISPLAYS – Population 20,001 – 50,000

Barberton, OH – 2002

- Barberton Beautification produces two horticultural events, the Mum Fest and the Tulip Festival. These appeal to residents and people in the outlying areas.

Bartlett, TN – 2003, 2004, 2005

- A yard of the month program and civic pride awards recognizing homeowners and businesses for their special efforts.

Lake Oswego, OR – 2003*

- As new in-ground planters are constructed, GIS-based watering systems are incorporated and controlled through the city maintenance offices.

TURF AND GROUNDCOVER

Judges' Suggestions

- Create a publicity program regarding the naturalization of parks and open spaces to help inform the public of the advantages of such a program – not the least of which is less dependence upon chemical controls and fertilizers which can affect waterways.
- The addition of wildflowers and prairie grasses can reduce the need for constant mowing in parks and open spaces. Reducing mowing reduces air pollution.
- Eliminate grass close to fence lines to simplify mowing.
- Encourage the use of ground covers, shrubs, and mulched beds to minimize mowing. Be sure that species used are suited to the specific environment.
- To reduce time and maintenance, where appropriate, combine mulch circles and create a biodiverse approach toward turf management.
- Consider the use of shade tolerant ground covers to sites not conducive to turf establishment.
- In case of drought, allow the grass to die. It will return with the rain.
- Where feasible, consider the use of automatic irrigation systems to reduce labor costs.
- Key personnel might be identified to receive more extensive training on the latest lawn care practices at professional seminars, to serve as a resource as well for the community, the many church athletic fields, and outreach education.
- Educational efforts and presentations might also include using a diversity of lawn species, proper soil enrichment to lessen need for fertilizers, and proper culture including mowing practices to minimize needs for pesticides and herbicides.
- Through beautification awards and recognition, promote home use of increased ground covers and alternative welcoming front gardens.
- Reduced mowing in public areas, as well as in home landscapes, would not only save labor but will reduce use of fossil fuels and related pollution. In addition to reduced environmental impacts from extensive turf areas, groundcovers provide benefits for wildlife. A main selling point to citizens might be the decreased costs to the budget, and so their taxes, from labor for mowing. Such labor could be redirected to other duties to better city spaces and avoid hiring of more personnel.
- Commercial businesses utilizing eco-design principles and groundcovers instead of turf could be showcased. Where large expanses of turf exist and are mowed, maintained areas might be kept near high traffic areas, converting remaining large areas to meadows, or seasonally mowed areas containing massed native shrubs.
- Convert any sharp mowing corners to rounded in order to save time, as well as combining nearby mulched beds and circles

- Expand education seminars, publications, and workshops on best management practices for homeowner lawns to result in less maintenance, more sustainability, and more environmentally friendly habitats.
- Promote and increase the use as possible of groundcovers in parking lot strips and large turfed areas, perhaps through guidelines and even in the updated landscape ordinance.
- Provide education on recycling grass clippings, leaving on the lawn, and use of mulching-type mowers.
- Along lakesides, encourage or require buffer plantings to reduce chemical and soil runoff. Provide education to homeowners about plantings around trees, and proper mulching, in order to reduce “mower blight” or trunk injury to trees caused by mowers and weed trimmers.

TURF AND GROUNDCOVER – Population 20,001 – 50,000

Bartlett, TN – 2003, 2004, 2005

- The public back sides of municipal buildings were as neatly mowed as the fronts.
- The Park and Recreation and the Public Works Department share the mowing responsibilities in the city and share equipment when the need arises avoiding the costly duplication of equipment.
- The city has adopted a “Property Maintenance Code” (Title 11–0101) calling for upkeep of properties. The ordinance is designed to avoid urban blight, maintain property values, and enhance the public, health, safety and welfare of Bartlett’s citizens.

Working with the Judges

- Prepare a “community portfolio” organized according to the eight criteria upon which each entry will be judged. It should contain a listing of all the sites that relate to each area of concern that the judges are likely to visit. For example, under Environmental Efforts, list the Composting Operation, Recycling Facility, etc. For each site, you might add a short paragraph describing the facility and its operation.
- Include the names, titles, and contact information for those persons that the judges would meet at each facility or location. All this would help the committee organize its presentation and would make the work of the judges more effective and comprehensive.
- As a part of the judges’ binder, materials such as city newsletters, written policies on trees and recycling, before and after pictures of projects, future space planning (i.e., greenway plans), environmental efforts, newspaper articles, educational and informational brochures supplied to residents and businesses are helpful. Look at the binder as documentation of a year’s work. The local AIB committee can use a duplicate as promotion for the following year and to take with them when speaking to civic groups.
- Be sure everyone met by a judge wears a name tag.
- Provide judges a list of all the people they will meet and include contact information.
- Communicate with your judges before they arrive, let them know where they’ll be staying and review the itinerary with them well before their arrival.
- Stay in touch with your judges after their visit. Send articles about their visit that have appeared in the local press.