



Municipality of North Grenville

To: **Council**

Meeting Date: October 15, 2024

Subject: 2024 Communities in Bloom Community Evaluation

Report No: CS-2024-005

Prepared by: Ashley Cuthbert, Acting Strategic Initiatives Coordinator

Recommendation(s)

THAT Council receive the 2024 North Grenville evaluation and rating from Communities in Bloom Ontario;

AND THAT Council direct staff to consider the feedback in preparing future work plans and budgets.

Executive Summary

Purpose

- To review the 2024 Communities in Bloom Evaluation.

Key Findings

- North Grenville's rating in Communities in Bloom has improved since 2024, reflecting the ongoing efforts of residents, businesses, and municipal staff.
- Participation in the program provides valuable insights into community strengths and highlights opportunities for further enhancement.
- The feedback from Communities in Bloom judges serves as an external benchmark that helps guide future community initiatives and improvements.

Financial Implications

- Funding for participation was accounted for within the current budget. Staff can consider the judges' recommendations in preparing for future budgets.

Background/Analysis

In 2024 North Grenville participated in Communities in Bloom Ontario for the second consecutive year, welcoming judges to assess the community. Communities in Bloom Ontario is a non-profit organization that promotes community pride, environmental responsibility, and beautification. Evaluations are based on several criteria, including Tidiness, Community Appearance, Environmental Action, Heritage Conservation, Tree Management/Urban Forestry and Trails, Landscapes, and Floral Displays.

Communities are evaluated through a bloom rating system, designed to measure community excellence. Communities are rated on a scale of one (1) to five (5) blooms, with five (5) blooms representing the highest level of achievement. Ratings are determined based on the community's performance in specific criteria, as assessed by the visiting judges. In 2023, North Grenville was awarded three (3) blooms.

The judges' evaluation process included a guided tour of North Grenville and a review of the detailed profile book prepared by staff. This book highlighted the contributions of residents, businesses, institutions, and volunteers, showcasing local initiatives and community engagement. A photo contest was also held to further engage the community, providing promotional material for media and enhancing the North Grenville in Bloom Profile Book.

Based on the 2024 evaluation, North Grenville received a rating of four (4) blooms. Judges provided the following key recommendations:

- **Increase Floral Displays:** Expand the number of floral displays around hamlet signage or explore non-plant material options to enhance the areas beneath gateway signs.
- **Hydro Box Wraps:** Wrap hydro boxes with the town logo or artist-designed graphics to beautify these structures.
- **Weeding Program:** Increase regular weeding of sidewalks throughout the downtown core to improve cleanliness and appearance.
- **Tree Policy/Plan:** Develop and implement a tree policy ensuring that any trees removed due to road construction are replaced and maintained.
- **Staff Training:** Consider regular, on-site professional development or training for staff to enhance horticultural knowledge and skills.
- **Urban Forest Protection:** Protect the existing urban forest and encourage its growth amid ongoing development. Extend developer agreements to include the use of larger caliper trees and a two-year fee holdback to ensure that new trees meet Municipal standards, are acceptable species, and receive proper care until they thrive.
- **Tree Inventory:** Consider conducting a comprehensive tree inventory for each community within North Grenville.

- **Landscape Maintenance Plan:** Enact a detailed Landscape Maintenance Plan, particularly focusing on weed control in hardscape areas where mulch or ground covers are not appropriate.
- **Wayfinding Signs:** Install additional wayfinding signs to direct visitors to outlying attractions and key locations.
- **Bridge Planters in Kemptville:** Reconsider the placement of planters on the Prescott Street bridge in Kemptville. Moving them inside the railings could improve their visibility from the roadside.
- **Larger Hanging Planter Baskets:** Consider using larger-diameter planter baskets in downtown Kemptville. If budget constraints arise, opt for fewer, but larger and fuller baskets to enhance visual impact.

Relevance to Strategic Priorities

Strategic Pillar	2	A Strong, Connected, and Vibrant Community
Goal	2.1	Strengthen Community Engagement
Key Action	2.1.1	Foster engagement and partnerships among community organizations and leverage benefits of partner organizations, including on organizing events, art and culture, and improving face-to-face and digital town halls etc.

Options and Discussion

1. Approve the recommendations suggested by the judges.
2. Support staff suggestions and work plans to implement the judges' recommendations.

Financial Impact

This item has been identified in the current budget: Yes, this item was identified in the current budget.

This item is within the budgeted amount: Yes, this item did not exceed the monetary allotment.

Staffing implications, as they relate to implementing Council's decision on this matter, are limited to the existing staff complement and applicable administrative policies as approved by Council.

Internal/External Consultation

All staff departments were consulted and participated in showcasing key municipal projects that enhance the community. Local businesses, community groups, and volunteers actively participated, guiding judges and sharing their contributions. Notable participants included the Ferguson Forest Centre and the Kemptville Campus, both of which provided in-depth tours and discussed their future objectives.

Communications

A dedicated Facebook Page will post year-round updates regarding North Grenville's active involvement in Communities in Bloom, including details about the recent evaluation. Additionally, a press release will be issued to highlight the community's accomplishments.

Attachments

- Communities in Bloom 2024 Evaluation
- 2024 North Grenville in Bloom Profile Book