

America in Bloom 2022

Judges Recommendations and Suggestions

General Observations- They were very laudatory over how the City works with the community and all the volunteers. They used superlatives for the Cities' efforts. They loved the presentations.

Community Vitality- – got 87% of a possible 88 points 3rd best area for us in our report. They were overwhelmed by the volunteerism and how well government works with volunteers.

1. Playing to our strength they suggest more collaboration. Consider a shared services model so that all non profits can benefit. Such things as IT, marketing, design, ticketing, finance.) See CAPA Columbus as a model.
2. Find ways to partner with gated communities.
3. Establish a regional America in Bloom Chapter like Lake County fl Check out American Community Gardening Association for ideas.
4. Develop a community garden like the one in Nokomis- maybe at housing authority or Legacy Park next to Demonstration Garden.
5. Incredible volunteerism- Start doing a better job of tracking hours to the benefit of grant making.

Flowers – got 86 out of 96 possible points for 89%– the top category

1. Have a program to promote pollinator habitats-they did recognize we have some good pollinator gardens.
2. Reactivate programs to recognize and businesses and residents with attractive displays
3. More labeling of plants for learning about the plants
4. Mass plantings at park entrances using pollinators
5. Maybe have a pollinator garden with story board. Check the pollinator program at the Cincinnati zoo.
6. Consider moving the kids garden to in front of the library.
7. Consider Flower Towers like Gallipolis, Ohio- can be ordered on line or make our own.

8. Consider having a flower festival like Greenwood, SC maybe tie in to Hazeltine's fall or spring festival.
9. Consider a floating flower display in the pond in front of Michael Biehl mural.
10. Expand the Bromeliad garden in Heritage Park to include orchids and other epiphytes maybe in nearby trees. Might be a great chance to partner with Selby Gardens since this is their mission. Use it more as an educational garden.
11. Do more educating by identifying plantings such as in the Garden Club Demonstration Garden or other gardens like on Nokomis at the Frontier building.

Landscaped Areas- 70 out of 84 possible points 83%

1. Reinstate the home recognition program for great landscapes.
2. Encourage use of Florida friendly Landscape plants like used at Lanning Center and City hall. Then promote it better.
3. They recommend for the historic Lord Higel House that it is landscaped like Eagle Point with historic shell paths and thatch palms, saw palmetto and live oaks.
4. Continue the push for pollinators
5. They recommend a native garden between the library and art center (possibly do the same in Centennial Park on the plot the Garden Club started to do just that.
6. Landscape around the Centennial Park sign Nassau and W. Venice Ave. Use plants that can do well in shade.

Urban Forest/trees- 60 out of possible 78 points- 77%

General observations they made: The parks dept has done extremely well. There is not enough involvement with the public with tree plantings and often the tight lot lines don't allow for trees.

1. Make it so people can locate the Urban Forest, permanent signage.
2. Use QR coding in the Forest to identify the trees and be able to learn about them

3. Get the grand trees to receive Champion tree status and mark them.
4. There is not enough interaction with Chamber of Commerce and Sarasota County on Promoting Green businesses. Recognize the Green Businesses
5. Consider ensuring Safe Streets joining the Complete Streets program at smartgrowthamerica.org/whatarecompletestreets

Environmental Efforts 79 out of 94 possible points- 84%

General Observation - While we are doing many good things they feel we can do a lot better in the use of cleaner and environmentally beneficial energies. They think our businesses and citizens are not getting the full exposure on Green practices. We should partner more with the County that is very strong in Green programs.

1. Strengthen the relationship with the Florida Extension; Market harder the programs the extension has with residents.
2. One way is to provide a drop down on the website for extension programs and other programs in the region.
3. Task the Environmental Advisory Board with developing a sustainable Action Plan. Hawthorne Woods, Illinois has a model program. Reference the report.
4. Work with the County and partner with the Chamber to promote conservation practices. Once implemented have the City and Chamber of Commerce start recognizing and promoting Green businesses.
5. Consider adopting the "Complete Street Policy" as outlined by Smart Growth America and their complete street program. We have a lot of runners and bikers, and three wheelers, and electric bikes that need a program to help control.

Celebrating Heritage – 56 out of 79 points= 80%

1. Examine combining the two historic organizations. Each does good things and promotes history at the exclusion of the other so people do not get all the opportunities in one brochure or promotion piece.

2. Continue with efforts to become a CLG. You have aligned things to get it done now just need to pull it together.
3. Add a oral history component to the Archives much as the county does with its Video Hall of Fame- could be audio instead.
4. Create a 2026 Centennial celebration committee including members from many different parts of the community.
5. Combine the Architectural and Historic Preservation Boards (that one already accomplished)
6. Create a youth ambassador program.
7. Light the Army Base monument near Venice Avenue in Heritage Park.

Overall Impression- 71 out 80 possible points 88%

1. The area between US41 by pass and the bridge is bleak.
2. Add street scape to that area with trash receptacles, benches, planters, maybe art like the sea horses
3. Purchase the building on the NW corner of the ByPass and Venice Ave. Demolish the building and make a nice focal point for those entering the city. It could tie nicely to the adjoining park.
4. **Consider having a city planner design this area or have a committee tasked with upgrading it. (Not their suggestion)**
5. Consider a façade grant program to cost share with owners upgrading their façades. Groveland Fl has a very good one.
6. Create a mural tour have MainStreet develop this, use QR codes to explain each one.
7. The north entrance sign underwhelms. The color is great but the sign is just not a standout (big enough) and the plants are not strong.
8. The Water Plant has a big need of landscaping, along the street and in the planter.
(Work began on this shortly after their stay with us)