

America in Bloom 2015 EVALUATION FORM



Participant: Lexington, Kentucky

Population Category: Over 40,000

Visiting Dates: June 22-23, 2015

Judges: Alex Pearl & Barbara Vincentsen

America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play – benefitting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage; and planting pride through volunteerism.

All judging criteria will be adjusted to the climate and environmental conditions of the participant's location.

The judges' report is based on efforts in management, planning, maintenance, improvement, and innovation of each of the following criteria:

| Criteria | Actual Points | Possible Points |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. Floral Displays | 148.00 | 175.00 |
| 2. Landscaped Areas | 153.00 | 175.00 |
| 3. Urban Forestry | 146.00 | 175.00 |
| 4. Environmental Efforts | 140.00 | 175.00 |
| 5. Heritage Preservation | 152.50 | 175.00 |
| 6. Overall Impression | 104.50 | 125.00 |
| Total | 844.00 | 1000 |
| % | 84.40 | |
| Bloom Rating | 4 | |

Five blooms = 85% Four blooms = 72.50–84.95% Three blooms = 60.00–72.45% Two blooms = 45.00–59.95% One bloom = <45.00%

Participant representatives met: (including email)

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General Comments and Suggestions:

Suggestions are indicated in italics.

Welcome to the 2015 America in Bloom program, Lexington's' second year of participation. The pride Lexingtonians feel for their great city is reflected throughout the city from the newly renovated central business district to the rolling green countryside to the north. Lexington - a city noted for champion thoroughbred horses - is a champion-style American in Bloom city. A city steeped in American history and in the future. Over the years Lexington has won numerous awards and recognitions for being among the best or most progressive cities in the nation. The most recent awards include best college town, best place to retire, and best green city. All of these accolades recognize a city that is attractive to residents and visitors for its good quality of life, in short an America in Bloom city. Your efforts in all categories of the America in Bloom program are making a difference. Congratulations on once again earning a high-scoring, prestigious four bloom rating. Much gratitude goes to Ann Garrity, Harry Clarke, their America in Bloom committee, and also to Tim Queary, Cathy Mobley, Mary Quinn Bob Quick, Isabell Yates, and Mayor Gray. So many others shared their love of Lexington and considering the possibilities of the future. Thanks to Mayor Jim Gray who declared June 23 a day dedicated to America in Bloom efforts. The judges met so many wonderful people that were sharing with us their love of Lexington. *It would be helpful if in the future more individuals wore name tags.*

Lexington has been the first city this team of judges has visited where the Salvation Army is using children as fund raisers and to build a culture of community involvement. They employed the "Lemonade Days" program (www.lemonadedays.org) to raise awareness for a cause and raise funds. "Lemonade Days" is a youth-focused program infused with life skills, character education, and entrepreneurship focused on youth. The foremost objective is to help today's youth become the business leaders, social advocates, community volunteers and forward-thinking citizens of tomorrow. The program aims to build self-esteem and new mindsets that can propel youth to success they likely would not have achieved otherwise.

The judges did not observe many vacant storefronts. *However in those rare cases where buildings were empty it is suggested the Chamber of Commerce request owners of vacant store fronts to allow non-profit organizations to set up a display in the window or paint an exhibit on window. This would increase the visual appeal of the street while creating an interest.*

A suggestion from a previous year to track volunteer hours is taking hold. *As the AIB steering committee gets comfortable with this concept, we hope they will reach out to many more organizations and agencies to gather their hours and parley the information to the community's benefit. This undertaking expands the opportunity for partnerships in many directions.*

One way to promote America in Bloom preparation efforts is to request businesses use a tag line in their weekly advertisements. For example, a hardware store might say, "The judges are coming in 10 weeks. Special of the week is clean up bags." The following week the ad line might say, "The judges are coming in 9 weeks. The special of the week is...." And so on for each week prior to the judges' visit.

In an effort to engage the youth of the community we suggest the Blue Grass Community Foundation establish an investment fund where by a committee of youth 14-18 years of age from the community gather to manage the funds to grow and provide grants to appropriate civic groups and projects. Such a real life experience will teach them about the needs of their community, while empowering them to make tough financial decisions, and help them see the value of community involvement through philanthropy.

Locust Grove High School is a model for career education. The newly constructed school was built with all of the newest environmental and sustainability elements on the market. Students earning high grades in their course work have the ability to use high school classes towards college credits. *If community service for students is not currently a requirement for graduation it is strongly suggested it be considered a component of any course work*

Thank you for your participation in America in Bloom. We look forward to your participation in 2016 and wish you a bright and vibrant future.

| 1. Floral Displays Flower beds, containers, baskets, window boxes. Arrangement, originality, distribution, location, diversity, balance, harmony, quality of maintenance. Use and integration of annuals, perennials, ornamental grasses, bulbs, tropical plants, and seasonal flowers that provide year-round interest. | Max points | Actual Score |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Leadership and plan of action for floral displays | 20 | 17 |
| Concept and design, variety of plantings, overall effect | 20 | 17 |
| Maintenance and quality of displays | 20 | 17 |
| Design for all seasons | 15 | 13 |
| Business | | |
| Concept and design, overall effect | 15 | 12.5 |
| Maintenance and quality of displays | 15 | 12.5 |
| Residential | | |
| Concept and design, overall effect | 15 | 13.5 |
| Maintenance and quality of displays | 15 | 13.5 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement in design, planting, and maintenance of floral displays | 20 | 16 |
| Financial and in-kind contributions to floral displays | 20 | 16 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 148.00 |

Comments and suggestions:

Running the length of Broadway and Rose Street to Triangle Park, a distance of some 6 city blocks, travelers are guided through the downtown corridor bordered by a variety of colorful in-ground beds. Planted with a mix of annuals and perennials, these beds steer you down the sidewalk. Several beds mimic a miniature rain garden. These beds incorporate signage to interpret what a rain garden is.

Wellington Park is the site for a number of worthwhile flower gardens. The women’s garden, rain garden, and native plant garden represent a coalition of efforts by Lexington’s garden clubs and active individuals.

The demonstration gardens located on the grounds of The Arboretum- State Botanical Garden of Kentucky are an inspiration for homeowners. Additionally, the children’s garden invites children and the young at heart to experience whimsical features that make them feel comfortable with being in nature.

Lexington is a component of the vision of the Preservation of the Monarch Migration (www.monarchwatch.org) stewardship of governments and private citizens of The United States, Canada and Mexico. Working together to create, conserve, and protect monarch habitats protect vital pollinators and other wildlife. Among others, Wild Ones has planted numerous waystations in Lexington. *Residents should have monarch watch progress milestones brought to their attention on a frequent basis. Consider a periodic "blurb" in the news or on the city website.*

Lexington is also a participant in The National Pollinator Garden Network (NPGN) <http://www.millionpollinatorgardens.org>, a collaboration of national, regional, and local gardening clubs that are working to restore critical pollinator populations. This effort is in support of the President's Executive Strategy to "Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators." Lexington's efforts are meant to inspire individuals, community groups, institutions and the garden industry to create more pollinator habitat through sustainable gardening practices, habitat conservation and provide these groups the tools to be successful. The NPGN network collectively represents approximately 800,000 gardeners, 10,000 schoolyard gardens and 250,000 registered pollinator gardens nationwide. *Schools can incorporate this theme into lesson plans and extend their efforts into establishing gardens on the school grounds. The William Wells Brown Elementary School and Community Center would be a good site for a year-round program.*

As a thoroughbred horse is the identifying symbol of Lexington, the city should consider selecting a city flower and promote it throughout the community.

The Lexington Council of Garden Clubs selects winning gardens on a two year cycle. An abundance of energy and work goes into preparing for the selection process, as well as the subsequent awards. *Open conversation with the organizing committee to see if there would be an interest in including individuals who are not home owners but may garden on patios, balconies, and rooftops. Entries could be submitted by photograph. Judging would be done by judges sitting around a table rather than site visits. Additionally you might include council members or even police officers as a public service to hand out the awards.*

Selected sites in the downtown business district such as Triangle Park would benefit from additional winter seasonal floral displays. Besides the use of flowering cabbage and kale, unusual branches, evergreens whose foliage is unique, deciduous shrubs whose branching habits might hold some interest and are painted are suggestions to be explored for possible display. Investigate the Chicago Botanical Garden website on plants of winter interest. See http://www.chicagobotanic.org/plantinfo/creating_winter_interest for ideas. We recommend coordinating colors of downtown horticultural displays throughout the community with other floral displays in other neighborhoods and roadways like the Bluegrass Parkway.

When reviewing ideas and plans for community gateways enhancements consider including a floral element to the design that will impact individuals with the statement of "I am in Lexington, KY!"

The mixed floral containers at the visitor center at The Arboretum - State Botanical Garden were visually appealing with their mix of succulents and flowering plants. Hanging baskets displayed along Main Street in the downtown district were well maintained. *Hopefully when Short Street is renovated the design will incorporate an abundance of colors, textures and fragrances from floral components.*



| 2. Landscaped Areas Overall design and suitability of landscape, turf, and ground covers. Use of native plants. Overall design and suitability for location/use. Good use of design principles (i.e., balance of plant material and constructed elements, harmony, color, texture, shape, etc.). Sustainability. Integration of hardscapes, lighting, site features. Maintenance (weeds, mulching practices, edging). Site rejuvenation and rehabilitation. Efforts in strategic planning. Community gardens, children’s gardens, healing gardens, Audubon and other specialty public gardens and zoos. | Max points | Actual Score |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Overall design and planting of landscape, turf and groundcovers | 15 | 13.5 |
| Environmental management of sports fields and turf | 15 | 13.5 |
| Quality of landscape maintenance | 15 | 13 |
| Sustainable management, naturalization and eco-design | 15 | 13.5 |
| Business | | |
| Overall design and planting of landscape | 15 | 13.5 |
| Management of turf and groundcovers | 10 | 8 |
| Quality of landscape maintenance | 15 | 13 |
| Residential | | |
| Overall design and planting of landscape | 15 | 13 |
| Management of turf and groundcovers | 15 | 13.5 |
| Quality of landscape maintenance | 15 | 13.5 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement, i.e. garden clubs, neighborhood groups, Master Gardeners and University extension, in funding, planting, and maintenance of landscaped areas | 15 | 12.5 |
| Participation in future planning (committees, councils, and advisory boards.) | 15 | 12.5 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 153.00 |

Comments and suggestions:

McConnell Springs is one of four natural areas managed by the Lexington Parks Department. Unique to this sanctuary are man-made floating wetlands. Floating wetlands manage water pollution and improve the appearance of the waterbody. As a result, they have tremendous potential for use in residential storm water ponds which are managed not only to protect water quality but also to be attractive landscape features that enhance property values in the community. Floating wetlands help manage excessive weed growth, algae blooms, and fish kills all the while adding value to the community by improving the look of ponds. This feature can also be seen at the Kentucky Horse Park.



In “Walk Across Kentucky” at The Arboretum - State Botanical Garden gardens demonstrate the seven distinct geographic regions of the state of Kentucky. “Walk Across Kentucky” is an extensive collection of Kentucky plant life where visitors can experience some of the spirit of Kentucky’s rich natural history. Now approaching 25 years of development, this ambitious project features some 1,200 trees and shrubs and more than 20 wildflowers and grasses representative of the diverse flora of the state.

The entrance medians for the Idle Hour Neighborhood create an exceptional landscape. The gardens not only excite the eye but the excellent choice of plant material extends the season of interest. It is a good example for the many other neighborhoods in Lexington.



The wide medians planted with turf and handsome trees that grace many of the roadways throughout the city provide a verdant reference to the agrarian heritage of the northern portion of the city. These truly are a treasure to be valued. Tates Creed Road, with its recently completed sidewalk and tree planting, is very well done.

Legacy Trail & Town Branch Creek Town Branch Trail (TBT) is a proposed 'shared-use' greenway trail (paved route for pedestrians and bicyclists) that will connect Downtown Lexington with its world-famous equine landscape via area neighborhoods, parks, and historic sites as it follows the westward course of Lexington's historic waterway, the Town Branch of Elkhorn Creek, along whose banks Lexington was founded in 1779. The trail is a significant component of Lexington's Greenway Masterplan, Downtown Masterplan, Downtown Streetscape Plan, and Newtown Pike Extension. TBT seeks to transform neglected or underutilized urban areas along the historic creek into a landscape trail that will serve among other things: recreation, commuting, the environment, tourism, and economic development. Partnering with the Manchester Development Company, miles of trails will be extended throughout Lexington. Additionally the company is also producing educational materials for use in regional middle school classrooms to raise awareness of Lexington's rich history and its connection to watershed. *Interpretative signage along the trail of topics covering community history, maps, mileage markers or environmental themes might be incorporated.*

Vacant land throughout the city can be an opportunity to explore urban agriculture. Adjacent to the William Wells Brown Elementary School and Community Center is a large tract of land that could be put to use. With intensive agriculture techniques, such as low and high tunnels, raised beds and cold frames the land can be productive. In conjunction with the Locust Grove horticulture program and other partners, this could be a career training program for the community. Seedleaf (www.seedleaf.org) is a non-profit organization whose goal is to nourish communities by growing, cooking, sharing, and recycling food. They are currently working with 16 community gardens and a number of food-oriented businesses to improve access to healthy food. Along with Master Gardeners, they are a force in the community attempting to improve how people look at the food they produce and eat. They encourage raising chickens in an urban environment. The introduction of beekeeping and rabbit tending is on the horizon. Additionally they have introduced a character development element into the children's program. *Inquire about the availability of students from the Locust Grove High School to be of some assistance for this program as this program would fit nicely into community service hours for the school.*

The Lexington Council of Garden Clubs has a rich history of gardening that extends nearly 60 years. Seven clubs are spread out across the city. They "provide education, resources, and networking opportunities for its members and promote the love of gardening, floral design, civic, and environmental responsibility." *Investigate the interest in organizing a men's garden club, if one has not already been established.*

Lexington's parks address a variety of citizens' recreational interests. McConnell Springs presents an in-depth view of the natural environment, while Shillito and Wellington Parks are venues for both active and passive recreational pursuits. *Consider adding exercise apparatus for a seniors' life trail system, either on existing trails within the parks or possibly along the Legacy Trails, to the mix. This equipment is designed to be used by individuals who may be physically challenged.*

See http://playworldsystems.com/product_listing?sect%5B%5D=749&brand%5B%5D=775

| 3. Urban Forestry Distribution, variety and suitability of trees; new plantings; urban tree program; qualified personnel or access to trained individual(s); inventory or database; frequency of tree surveys; care and maintenance programs; preservation of heritage trees and woodlots and green buffer zones; scheduled succession plantings. Efforts in management, planning, maintenance, improvement, and innovation. Written policies, bylaws and regulations, long- and short-term plans. | Max points | Actual Score |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Overall plan of action, tree planting programs, variety of species, inventory | 20 | 18 |
| Tree maintenance | 15 | 12 |
| Preservation and restoration of natural areas | 15 | 13.5 |
| Tree protection/planting regulations and by-laws | 15 | 12.5 |
| Business | | |
| Overall planting program | 20 | 15 |
| Tree maintenance | 15 | 12.5 |
| Residential | | |
| Overall planting program | 20 | 16 |
| Tree maintenance | 15 | 12.5 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement in funding, planting, and maintenance of trees (i.e. Tree City USA) | 20 | 17 |
| Volunteer involvement of youth in tree programs (i.e., Arbor Day, etc.) | 20 | 17 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 146.00 |

Comments and suggestions:

Begun in 1985, the Lexington Tree Board raises public awareness of the importance of the urban tree canopy by accepting the recognition of being a Tree City and also taking the program to heart. Under the banner of “Reforest the Bluegrass,” volunteers have restored floodplains and planted thousands upon thousands of seedlings. One can see their success today in the reforested areas along streams and byways. The tree board has raised funds and wisely spent government monies. The success of their efforts could not have gone as far as it has without the energies of residents of all ages.

Lexington government and home owners accept a shared responsibility for caring for the urban forest. The city attempts to make residents aware of this partnership by distributing brochures, fliers and other materials to property owners. While city ordinance makes it the homeowners’ responsibility to care for the tree (planting, pruning, removal), the city of Lexington will assist with the financial obligations of 50% reimbursement as long as matching funds are available.

When large trees need to be taken down, evaluate whether the tree would be a suitable candidate to be made into lumber rather than firewood or chips. Should particularly large old specimens require removal, consider placing a notice in the local paper and on the town website as many woodworkers would be interested in acquiring some of the wood for a variety of projects.

Lexington boasts a number of trees that date back to before Kentucky's statehood in 1792. Large trees grace the streets of the 14 historic districts. Lexington boasts champion trees on national (2), state (12) and county (1) registries. These regal trees are located on public and private properties. The list contains such behemoths as an American Basswood located in the vicinity of the Henry Clay Monument at the Lexington Cemetery, as well as a record -setting Cucumber Magnolia, Shellbark Hickory, and American Holly. On the campus of Transylvania University is a titleholder White Ash, also known as the kissing tree. A local champion Bald Cypress is located on private property, as are a Burr Oak and Chinquapin Oak. *With such celebrity status, these trees could be propagated and used for fund raising or recognition of special individuals. Consider partnering with such organizations as the Kentucky Heritage Council (www.heritage.ky.gov), Kentucky Arborist Association (www.ky-isa.org), or Kentucky Nursery Growers Association (www.knla.org) to facilitate such an undertaking.*

Consider a partnership with the Lexington Legends minor league baseball team: for every home run or game won a tree will be planted in the community.

Select some dying trees and take this opportunity to place interpretative signage on topics about the tree's life from birth to death, or its second life of supporting other organisms. If the tree is large enough, chainsaw art is another option.

The Beaumont subdivision was the one area where **volcano mulching** was observed. This mulching technique is detrimental to the tree and cause it to fail. Both the Kentucky Landscape Association (www.knla.org) and the Kentucky Arborist Association (www.ky-isa.org) can provide informational pieces for developers and landscapers alike on proper mulching techniques.

With a dedicated arboreal tree staff, consider paying special attention to not only heritage trees but other large trees of note in the public spaces, monitor their health and condition and provide the appropriate care to extend their lives. *Consider developing a Junior Arborist program for youngsters (ages 10-13) who will receive instruction on trees and their importance. Have them monitor and care for newly planted trees in their neighborhoods. For their efforts they could be given hats, t-shirts, instruction, and/or field trips. These junior arborists would be responsible for watering and weeding newly planted trees. Allow them to plant small gardens in the tree pit.*

| 4. Environmental Efforts Sustainability practices. Recycling (paper, glass, metal, plastic, electronics, clothing, etc.), policies and by-laws, sustainable development strategies, waste reduction, hazardous waste minimization and collection (oil, paint, chemicals, used batteries, etc.), water quality and conservation, energy conservation, environmental cleanup activities, reducing carbon footprint, environmentally friendly transportation, LEED certification, air, noise and light pollution, rain gardens and rain barrels, composting, energy efficiency, youth programs, etc. Events such as Earth Day, Recycling Days, Bike to Work Days, etc. | Max Points | Actual Score |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Leadership in environmental initiatives | 25 | 21 |
| Effective communication of environmental strategies and initiatives | 25 | 20 |
| New programs, improvement and innovation | 25 | 20 |
| Business | | |
| Participation in environmental efforts | 20 | 17 |
| New programs, improvement and innovation | 10 | 7 |
| Residential | | |
| Participation in environmental efforts | 20 | 15.5 |
| New programs, improvement and innovation | 10 | 7.5 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement in environmental efforts | 20 | 16 |
| Youth participation in environmental activities | 20 | 16 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 140.00 |

Comments and suggestions:

Lexington has gone to great lengths to raise awareness of environmentally friendly practices and to provide opportunities for all to implement them in their daily lives. We commend the Lexington Department of Waste Management staffers for their website design. The “Livegreen Lexington” logo is excellent, the information thorough, and the site very easy to navigate.

Four times per year there is a free household waste disposal day at the transfer station, with alternate locations available for disposal of paint, appliances and electronics. The web site information for this event is extremely well done and most informative, giving clear instructions to any residents wishing to take part in this event. The restoration of the historic Lyric Theater was a coup not only for historic preservation, but also for illustrating that restoration efforts to historic buildings can result in a LEEDS certified facility. The resultant opening celebration and media coverage helped spread the word on sustainable upgrades to our infrastructure. The US Green Building Council currently lists 8 LEEDS certified buildings in Lexington, with more underway. Congratulations to those leaders who have chosen to invest in the environment.

The North Limestone Community Development Corporation (<http://www.nolicdc.org/>) is another example of a pro-active group coordinating an effort to help improve a neighborhood using a blend of sustainable development strategies, environmental cleanup efforts and neighborhood activism to create a vibrantly evolving community. The group has worked on improvements to subsidized housing in a 1920s shotgun

development and is now working to procure an abandoned Greyhound terminal to develop it into an incubator for new business development in a zero waste environment. Congratulations to this group on receiving several large grants to assist in the attainment of these goals.

McConnell Springs Nature Park, a beautifully restored natural area park is one of five such parks in Lexington. This park supports a significant environmental education program as well as hosting 4-5000 people for weekend programs. Volunteer hours are carefully recorded and the information used when seeking grants for the park.

The public golf courses in Lexington practice sound environmental strategies on numerous levels. Indeed, these courses include one of the few programs we heard about involving water conservation. All rainwater run-offs is collected on site and recycled as part of the irrigation process.

Lexington parks' and open spaces' management plans follow a strategy of IPM that applies as few treatments as possible. Few fertilizers are applied to sports fields and the five golf courses are all Audubon certified.

Programs for removal of household waste are numerous. Residents living in the immediate city limits receive pickup once per week with separate containers for trash, recycling and yard waste sent for composting rather than to a landfill. *We noticed in many cases communities have no screened location capable of housing the containers, which must then sit in the front of the residence. Consider requiring screened areas for container storage in multifamily neighborhood developments to limit the visual impact of waste receptacles or provide smaller container options which fit in more limited garage areas.*

Some residents not served by the municipal hauler use private haulers who, in addition to the base rate, are charged an additional fee for recycling. While trash removal fees are based on the size of the container the contract provides an incentive to recycle more (different bin) and pay less for trash removal. We were surprised to learn that recycling is not mandatory through the municipal hauler. *Having the city design a program in which recycling is part of the service and fees are based on the size of the trash receptacle would provide a financial incentive to diligently recycle to reduce the amount of trash per household.*

Transylvania University and University of Kentucky are also involved in recycling, participating in an event called RecycleMania (www.recyclemaniacs.org). *While this program is aimed at universities across the country, it could easily serve as a model for secondary and elementary schools in the district. Schools could maintain a "thermometer" showing weekly or monthly recycle rates and schools could be ranked quarterly to track how they fared in this friendly competition.*

Locust Trace AgriScience High School is a new school facility that serves as a model of what is possible in energy-efficient school construction. This facility operates at net zero energy as well as net zero waste disposals, an amazing achievement. The numerous strategies incorporated into the design of the building create a nearly perfect environment for the curriculum taught at the school. *If you do not already do so, please open this facility periodically to groups interested in designing with the environment in mind. Students in engineering, architecture and environmental studies, and chapters of the American Institute of Architects (www.aia.org) are a few who would be fascinated by this achievement.*

Lexington now is home to numerous corporate facilities, some of which are housed in LEEDS certified buildings. An outstanding example of what a corporation can bring to the community is Lexmark Corporation. This corporation actively pursues a policy of environmental stewardship with outstanding results. Over the last decade the company lowered its water consumption by 54%. Lexmark is active in numerous environmental

initiatives such as the Cane Run Watershed Council and Trees for Tracks, is a Bluegrass Green Source business partner, and encourages employees to volunteer locally, providing paid leave to do so.

Furthering the cooperation among businesses in the greening of Lexington are several admirable programs. The “LiveGreenLexington” Partners program is funded by LFUCG and managed by Bluegrass Greensource (www.bggreensource.org). This program provides free resources to businesses to promote recycling and reduce waste. Beyond this, there is currently a Green Business Challenge underway, which is a competition among businesses aimed at helping firms reduce their bottom line by actively incorporating sustainable practices in water and waste management into their daily business practice.

Lexington is blessed with a very high annual rainfall and has numerous very lovely rain gardens which have been installed to effectively control runoff and flooding and to create significant areas of native plantings. Bluegrass Greensource has published a well-written rain garden manual for residential use. The professionally-engineered rain garden installed in The Arboretum and State Botanical Garden of Kentucky is one particularly handsome and effective example. Volunteers provide most of the staffing of this arboretum which is home to the rain garden and are frequently tasked with finding creative ways of raising funds. *During our visit we happened to notice a large area of goldenrod (Solidago odora) with very attractive gall formations. Consider having a youth group assist in harvesting this goldenrod, drying them and selling them to florists for fall arrangements. The youth could keep half the proceeds, with the arboretum obtaining some much needed funding.*

Commercial composting of food waste is in its infancy. Seedleaf (www.seedleaf.org) is currently collecting compostable waste from a limited number of commercial clients. *Investigate expanding the practice to all possible industries. Cornell University Composting Waste Management Institute (www.css.cals.cornell.edu) and the U.S. Compost Council (www.compostingcouncil.org) are two references for implementing a community-wide program.*

To highlight business efforts to be responsible environmental community partners, the city in conjunction with Commerce Lexington can consider recognizing a business for a Mayor’s Award for Environmental Excellence.

With the emergence of interest in Halloween and accompanying decorations, create an event that recognizes composting by having a ‘Pumpkin Pitch’. Such an event can highlight dropping pumpkins from high places, decorating pumpkins, smashing pumpkins’... then composting the wastes.

| 5. Heritage Preservation Historical, natural, agricultural, and cultural heritage. Preservation and restoration of buildings, homes, churches, cemeteries; heritage sites and/or monuments; heritage parks, historical gardens; artifacts; historical society; heritage advisory committee, museums, archives, history books, and interpretative programs; ordinances and policies. Resource availability. Farmers markets, festivals and parades. | Max Points | Actual Score |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Leadership in preservation and restoration initiatives | 25 | 22.5 |
| Legal protection of heritage sites | 25 | 22.5 |
| Resource availability for preservation and restoration | 25 | 22.5 |
| Business | | |
| Conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of properties | 15 | 13.5 |
| Participation in and support of heritage/cultural activities | 15 | 13.5 |
| Residential | | |
| Conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of properties | 15 | 14 |
| Participation in and support of heritage/cultural activities | 15 | 13 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement in cultural, historical, and natural heritage activities | 20 | 16 |
| Youth involvement in heritage activities | 20 | 15 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 152.50 |

Comments and suggestions

Lexington has been proactive for years in preserving and celebrating its history and culture. With great presence the city recognized the danger urban sprawl presented to its agrarian heritage and took steps to limit the sprawl and protect both the urban and agrarian communities. As with last year’s judges, we were charmed by the aerial view of the city from our plane as we approached the city.

The many museums, parks and sculptures designed to celebrate the equine heritage of LFUCG are spread throughout the county and are reminders of the importance of this culture to the city. When one thinks of thoroughbred horses and Kentucky the only thought can be Lexington. Thoroughbred Park is a two-acre park where the strength, grace, and power of thoroughbred are displayed in bronze statues. The park recognizes 42 horse figures of the thoroughbred industry. Seven greater than life-size horse figures are portrayed racing down a stretch focusing all of their energy, grace and power. Viewers can feel the tension of nostrils flaring, hoofs pounding, riders urging their steed to reach the finish line before the other horses.



Farmers’ markets abound in Lexington, including the market at the University of Lexington campus and the downtown market at the Pavilion, an outdoor venue that also hosts “Thursday Nite Live”, a popular weekly outdoor event.

Many beautiful cemeteries are located within Lexington. Lexington Cemetery is the resting place of numerous notable Kentuckians, including Henry Clay who is buried in this 160 year old cemetery. The cemetery hosts events on Memorial Day and a Civil War observance.

Volunteers working at McConnell Springs brought heritage preservation to the fore in an area which brings many visitors. Working with tools and materials which would have been used by early settlers, the volunteers built a log cabin which replicates the living quarters used by those settlers. Programs have been created around this site portraying the life of early pioneer settlers.

Our visit to Brilliant Farm highlighted the importance of these farms to the region. Thoroughbred Heritage Horse Farm Tours coordinates and selects farms available for touring on a rotating basis, thus reducing the impact of visitors on any one farm. Many thanks to the horse farm owners for making this viewing opportunity available.

An earlier generation of Lexington residents saw the need to control the growth of the city and enacted boundaries for the outward growth of the city known as the Urban Growth Boundary. Largely unaltered, it has set standards for permanently maintaining open spaces. Agricultural lands have an easement on the property known as a Property Development Right (PDR). This requires landholders in extreme cases of emergency to turn their open land to agricultural pursuits in order to raise food for the greater population. Conservation easements resulted in preserving 249 farms totaling 28,801 acres. PDR is now at 58 percent of the 50,000 acre goal defined in the ordinance.

Our visit to the Hunt Morgan House and Gratz Park impressed us with the dedication of the volunteers and the extent of their efforts including not only the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation, but also the garden club dedicated to this house. Such coordination between organizations clearly benefits the city.

Among its many initiatives, the Blue Grass Trust developed several walking tours of historic areas in the city. These well-conceived tours are listed on their website, along with maps and descriptions of the points of interest on the route. The BGT plaques on historic buildings in the 17 historic districts exemplify the pride of Lexington heritage citizens can display.

Lexington's heritage is displayed in many other venues. The Kentucky Horse Park, Lincoln Mural, and Thoroughbred Park are among the more visible symbols of the importance of heritage in the growth of the city. While these establishments are not museums in the strictest sense, they just as surely embody and relate the culture of the region.

Lexington neighborhoods, lined with beautiful historic homes, are a delight. Many of these homes have been sensitively restored and maintained by their owners. *Consider hosting annual awards for new restoration efforts completed throughout the year. These awards could be hosted by the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation (www.bluegrasstrust.org) and be presented at an annual ceremony each winter. Winners would receive plaques and recognition in news releases.*

Restoration of significant historic structures is apparent everywhere in downtown Lexington. Plans are in place to move forward on restoration of the historic Court House building. Years of neglect led to conditions within the building resulting restoration costs approaching \$40 million. Kudos to your elected officials for voting to save the building and moving forward to secure state tax credits and federal historic tax credits totalling nearly \$11 million. *We understand there is currently no planned tenant for this building when renovations are complete but hope that at least a portion of the building would be reserved for the history museum, which resided in the*

court house until very recently.

Numerous organizations in Lexington work with the common goal of preserving the heritage of the area. These organizations come from many different points of view, providing a vibrant and varied multi-prong approach to the challenge. Groups include neighborhood associations, the visitors' bureau, the farm bureau, as well as the Kentucky Blue Grass Trust (BGT) (www.bluegrasstrust.org). *Consider developing a page on the website with a calendar of heritage-related activities and opportunities from all these organizations in one convenient location. Such a listing is currently not available.*

Consider a heritage scavenger hunt for school-aged children. Provide forms with items which must be found and space for the competitor to fill in the location. This is a great summer vacation activity, and answers can be checked when school re-opens.

Historic districts and sites throughout Lexington are well-marked with signs of uniform design making identification easy. Similarly, landmarks boast signage, frequently augmented by the logo of the Blue Grass Trust. *We were unable to locate a map identifying the locations of each of the local and national landmarks and suggest one be developed. Should such a map exist, an online mention with information on where a copy can be obtained would be most helpful.*



| 6. Overall Impression | Max points | Actual Score |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| Lack of litter and graffiti. Maintenance of public open spaces, medians and boulevard strips, streets, sidewalks, walking and biking trails, curbs, ditches, road shoulders, unattended and vacant lots, buildings, garbage receptacles; lack of weeds, dog waste policies and receptacles, notices/posters appropriately displayed, vandalism not evident. Maintenance of the hardscape: walls, lamp posts, benches, playgrounds, etc. Appropriate use and placement of sculpture, wayfinding signs, graphic elements such as banners, signs and murals. | | |
| Municipal | | |
| Overall cleanliness | 10 | 8 |
| Maintenance of public roads and shoulders | 10 | 8 |
| Condition of public buildings and properties | 10 | 8 |
| Impact of graphic elements - banners, wayfinding signs, murals, etc. | 10 | 9 |
| Business | | |
| Overall cleanliness | 20 | 16 |
| Condition of buildings and properties | 20 | 18 |
| Residential | | |
| Overall cleanliness | 10 | 8.5 |
| Condition of buildings and properties | 10 | 8.5 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Participation in clean-up efforts, adopt-a-spot, annual cleanup days, etc. | 15 | 13 |
| Recognition of volunteer efforts | 10 | 7.5 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 125.00 | 104.50 |

Comments and suggestions:

Lexington is well-known as a travel destination with many lovely places available for visitors and numerous attractions worthy of return visits. The appearance of the city from the first views approaching the airport, or on major arteries if arriving by automobile, to more intimate views when touring the city on foot is truly beguiling. The downtown area is fresh and clean, with no graffiti visible in any of the areas the judges visited. We understand that any graffiti reported to the County Sheriff's Office is immediately removed, a strategy that is apparently working quite well.

While graffiti was not observed, weedy curbs and an abundance of cigarette butts were very evident on downtown streets. *Request business owners' cleanup debris left in front of their businesses. Consider making this a priority on cleanup days. Some groups could earn money by forwarding cigarette butts to Terracycle (www.terracycle.com) which will then recycle them by exposing them to gamma radiation, separating and shredding the plastics and organics, composting the paper and tobacco and diluting the toxic residue [cellulose acetate] to be melted into pellets. This by-product will become a shipping palette or a railroad tie. Sponsor a penny for a butt event.*

New hardscaping is immaculate. Urban park areas provide welcome areas for seating. The streetscape along Main Street (in the four blocks which comprise Phase One of the Streetscape Master Plan) sets a high standard for the remaining phases of the work, with handsome lamp posts, benches and trash receptacles. Indeed, the receptacles along this area are the most attractive, distinctive design we have seen in any of our tours. *If you have not already done so, we recommend you develop a maintenance program with timelines for repair or replacement of walks and hardscape to maintain this very high standard in the future.*



The areas which have not yet received the scheduled face lift called for in the Master Plan, for example Short Street and the smaller business districts are attractive, and new businesses, including shops and restaurants, are attracting more visitors themselves. The emphasis on upgrading and repurposing existing buildings is paying off. *While streetscapes are waiting their turn for beautification, close attention to control of weeds and litter is needed.* Phoenix Park, the public square in front of the nearly completed 21C Hotel, attracts many visitors. The park's location adjacent to a large construction site poses a challenge aesthetically. *We recommend you maintain this area to the highest standard to offset the detraction of the fenced site. Perhaps the best method of removing the weeds growing between the pavers would be the use of a steamer.*

The Downtown District of Lexington is a combination of new and old. From The Gratz Historic District representing the root beginning of the community along Broadway to Triangle Park and the Convention Center representing the new vision of the community Lexington showcases the characteristic charm of an old city nicknamed “the Athens of the South”. The identification of the downtown as a Downtown Management District (DMD) will have an impact on the future direction for the city. Already the landscape of Short Street is being altered to encompass the entire three blocks to become a parklet where entertainment and restaurants will spill out into the street and traffic will be redirected. In the immediate future, “bulb-outs” are to be painted in the street to mimic the effect of repaving and re-curbings which is planned as a later phase. *To protect pedestrians from nearby traffic, bollards or heavy planters will need to be installed. Consider using concrete coffin vaults as a readily available, inexpensive container.* The continued progress of the Town Branch Commons Park project will extend the Legacy Trail for walkers, runners and bikes, linking one side of the city to the other.

Beyond the immediate downtown area, many of the roads are showing evidence of the abundant rainfall in the region, as weeds are outpacing the ability of workers to control them, especially in areas where the curbing is in need of replacement. *Using jail or prison labor may be an avenue to investigate to assist in keeping up with this task.*

Legible wayfinding signs throughout LFUCG are well-conceived. They clearly brand the area with its ties to all things equestrian. We were surprised, however, at the lack of any gateway sign of any significance at entrances into the city. *In addition to the extensive median planting that is underway in preparation for the October Breeders Cup, we recommend planning for a permanent gateway sign commence. Perhaps the design for this entry should be part of a competition.*

The Neighbor's Alliance at Idle Hours Neighborhood Alliance received a grant to assist in the entry median project. We commend Lexington for making grants to this and other neighborhoods for beautification efforts through Community Development Grants, Council Grants for Neighborhoods, EcoArt Grants, and others. This excellent source of funds helps dedicated volunteers achieve improvement goals in their neighborhoods.

Numerous well-done murals adorn buildings within the city, providing visual interest and deterring graffiti. West Sixth Brewery, an enterprise in an emerging neighborhood, is home to several particularly appealing artistic efforts.



Similarly, banners throughout the city provide identity to different neighborhoods.



Corporate parks are home to numerous businesses. Without exception, those that we observed were well maintained. One outstanding example was the display by RJCorman. *Just as large corporate parks can affect the landscape; small businesses can make a significant visual impact. Perhaps the Chamber of Commerce would consider awarding "Business of the Month" awards to those businesses that make special efforts to improve their appearance. In addition to recognition in the local press, a sign could be posted at the entry to the business.*

We applaud the walking/biking trails being developed with the goal of linking neighborhoods and parks. *With this development we suggest wayfinding signage be installed at all trailheads. These signs should include QR codes which would lead bikers to your online map showing all current and planned trails in the county and its immediate environs complete with a "you are here" designation to aid in orientation. We also suggest the installation of more bike racks throughout the city.*

In the training component for employees of the newly created Downtown Business Improvement District, create an atmosphere of employees as ambassadors for Lexington. Include in their duties not only the responsibility for cleanliness of the district but also to direct visitors to the site-related information about the city, i.e. restaurants and places of interest.

Triangle Park or Phoenix Park would appear to be locations for a lunchtime event series including storytelling, poetry reading, speakers' corner or musical performances.

Through a coalition of the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Convention & Visitor's Bureau, seek a sponsor for an annual event of the best idea that makes Lexington more successful. The idea must focus on one or all of three key drivers: attracting and retaining talent, expanding economic opportunity, and creating a culture of robust civic engagement.

Checklist for Judges and Participants:

| Yes | No | N/A | |
|-----|----|-----|---|
| X | | | Were the judges given a community profile, itinerary, and map prior to their arrival? |
| X | | | Did the itinerary provide for seeing a representative cross-section of the participant? |
| X | | | Were the guides knowledgeable about the participant and horticultural aspects? |
| | x | | Were the judges able to modify the schedule if needed? |
| X | | | Did the judges meet with the media? |
| X | | | Did the judges meet with municipal leaders? |
| X | | | Were the judges asked to give presentations? |
| x | | | Were the judges able to meet with and talk to volunteers? |
| | x | | Was enough time allotted to complete the evaluation form in a quiet place? |

Comments:

DEFINITIONS

Municipal: City hall and other municipal properties, parks and open spaces, roads, roadsides, sidewalks, cemeteries, schools and sports facilities, empty lots and brownfields, libraries, hospitals, assisted living, churches, universities, and colleges

Business: Commercial and industrial sectors, shopping centers, stores, office buildings, restaurants, mixed use developments, service stations, railway and bus stations, plant nurseries/garden centers

Residential: Single family residences, condominiums, town houses, planned communities, apartment buildings, gated communities, manufactured home communities, trailer parks, residential developments, neighborhoods, graduated care facilities

Community Involvement: Volunteer efforts by individuals, clubs, youth groups, church groups, civic organizations, and social clubs for community enhancement



2015 Special Mentions

Participant: Lexington, Kentucky

Recognized Criterion: Overall Impression

From the moment one enters the municipal limits of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County, visitors and residents alike are struck with the elegance and energy that vibrates throughout the community. From the peaceful rolling hills of the outer protected greenspaces to the excitement of the downtown, one is struck with the activity of a city that is constantly on the move. Art is incorporated into the landscape through many means, from creatively-painted street drains, to artistically engraved garbage cans, to pulsating racing horse statues, to an eight story high mural of Abraham Lincoln, to well-maintained stately antebellum homes. A parks system that touches the needs of active and passive recreational lifestyles is still expanding with the extension of the Legacy Trail system linking one side of town to the other through Town Branch Commons, a new park being developed right in the center of the city. Lexington's mix of educational, cultural and social organizations that influence the mind draws citizens to engage in many pursuits. Old neighborhoods have new life restored while still honoring the heritage of the structures.

Special Project or Initiative:

After two years of discussion, Lexington has created a Downtown Management District (DMD) to generate revenue that will be dedicated to infrastructure improvements of the central business district. Initial funds, estimated to be about \$400,000, will be available in 2016 and will be used to accelerate the pace of the already visible improvements in the downtown corridor to include such features as floral displays, trees and general landscaping.

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