

Update: Communities in Bloom/Edmonton in Bloom

Initiative Title: Communities in Bloom/Edmonton in Bloom

City Council Lead(s): Councillor Mike Nickel

Department Lead(s): City Operations, Doug Jones

Parks and Roads Services, Gord Cebryk

Parks and Roads Services NW, Jorn Starko

Recommendation - Renew for 2017-2021 Council Term

Objective:

Develop and deliver comprehensive programming, based on community engagement, to enhance civic beauty and increase citizen contact with our natural environment.

Program Elements:

Edmonton in Bloom: Umbrella Council Initiative is comprised of Communities in Bloom, Front Yards in Bloom, and the recognition of community projects that make Edmonton flourish. The Edmonton in Bloom Awards is an annual event and award ceremony that highlights and showcases select programs, projects, events, and initiatives that contribute to making Edmonton beautiful.

Communities in Bloom: National program that supports enhanced community beautification. For Edmonton, Communities in Bloom is an evaluated 4-day tour annually in late summer with visiting judges in the following criteria: Tidiness, Environmental Action, Heritage Conservation, Urban Forestry, Landscapes, Floral Displays

Front Yards in Bloom: Beautification program in Edmonton where homeowners are recognized through nominations for attractive front yards.

Key outcomes, projects or activities and their status as of April 2017:

May 2016 - April 2017 Projects:

- May 2016: Developed ongoing strategies to communicate and promote Edmonton's excellence and commitment to municipal greening and beautification through formal program and communications planning.

- June - August 2016: Supported local & existing programming, including Front Yards in Bloom, and Edmonton in Bloom Awards; participated in the International Challenge for Communities in Bloom.
- October 2016: Using formal evaluation from Communities in Bloom Program, developed new targets to improve community greening projects in Edmonton.
- Jan 2017: Administration and evaluation of the Front Yards in Bloom: Winterscapes program.

Desired and actual outcomes from the 2014-2017 Council Initiative Terms of Reference:

The following outcomes focus on the enhancement of green spaces (landscapes, trees, natural areas, and streetscapes) to enhance the look and feel of Edmonton; increased community engagement and community-based beautification of outdoor spaces in both groomed and natural areas; greater environmentally-responsible actions; increased vibrancy of urban areas; and improvement in civic livability.

1) Administration to receive continued input from stakeholders, community groups and City units related to forestry, horticulture, and natural history.

Current Status: The City of Edmonton continues to work with the Edmonton Horticultural Society and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. These key partners, as well as the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, have been an essential support system to meet the program's volunteer requirements. Sustainable Food Edmonton, Great Neighbourhoods (now Neighbourhoods Portfolio, Citizen Services), and the Edmonton Native Plant Group continue to serve as valuable volunteer supports as well.

2) Administration is working on promotional plans to increase the reach and public participation in the Edmonton in Bloom Initiative. Partnering with additional businesses and not-for-profit groups in the Greater Edmonton Area will allow for increased capacity to deliver the program.

Current Status: In 2016, Edmonton in Bloom received increased visibility at local events, where new posters and brochures were distributed to local businesses for display at points of sale, recognition of new sponsors, and the third year of

implementation of the Edmonton in Bloom Photo Scavenger Hunt social media promotion. A new sponsorship program was launched in early 2015 to support Front Yards in Bloom promotional activities. The Front Yards in Bloom Program is completely funded through sponsorship and donations. Nine corporate entities supported the program in 2016, alongside the continued financial support from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, a long-standing partner. The City of Edmonton launched a public volunteer program, where volunteers are matched with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. In 2017, the Administration will amplify promotions to attract new volunteers to keep up with the demands of the program and enhance participation from citizens.

3) Administration is working with communities in the Alberta Capital Region to recognize initiatives that should be recognized for their contributions that meet our proposed outcomes, and to host the Edmonton in Bloom Awards in August 2014.

Current Status: In 2016, 4,271 residences were recognized by their neighbours with a nomination for a Front Yards in Bloom award, along with a program brochure in the mail, increasing awareness of the initiative. There has been a 31% increase in the number of nominees since 2014. Approximately 350 people attended the 2016 Edmonton in Bloom awards at the Citadel Theatre. A variety of organizations contributed to the event and/or were recognized including Capital City Clean-Up, Sustainable Food Edmonton, Urban Forestry, Operation Fruit Rescue Edmonton, Edmonton Horticultural Society, Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Edmonton Native Plant Group, Edmonton Waste Management Services, Edmonton Journal, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, WinterCity Strategy, and Great Neighbourhoods (now Neighbourhoods Portfolio, Citizen Services). The 2017 Edmonton in Bloom Awards will be held on August 24, 2017 from 7:00-9:00 pm at the old Royal Alberta Museum location and will include new awards: Canada 150 Front Yards in Bloom, Balconies in Bloom and a Permaculture Hero award presented by the Edmonton Permaculture Guild.

4) City of Edmonton will be developing a communications strategy to promote Edmonton's Circle of Excellence evaluation and recognize beautification initiatives through Communities in Bloom.

Current Status: In 2016, Edmonton was recognized internationally at the Communities in Bloom Symposium in Regina, SK after receiving the first place

award for Very Large Communities in the International Challenge, with special mention of the Mosaic Centre building in Summerside. Results from the evaluation were posted on the City's program website, reported in Great City News and traditional public news outlets, with information on tour highlights, photos and awards. Results, recommendations, and more information were circulated to interested internal and external parties. The Community Profile Book (Edmonton in Bloom) was re-designed to highlight Edmonton's community initiatives for the public and is available on the website. Edmonton is registered for the Canada 150 evaluation category from July 23-26, 2017. Participating in the Canada 150 category will enhance international marketing and tourism opportunities and increase overall civic pride.

5) Front Yards in Bloom committee is developing and introducing a winter-themed Front Yards in Bloom Program (called Front Yards in Bloom: Winterscapes) in 2014 as a means to encourage community engagement and year-round beautification in Edmonton.

Current Status: Winterscapes was launched in 2014, and was delivered for the fourth time in early 2017. The program received good coverage in traditional news media and 14 entries were accepted. Award recipients will be formally recognized at the Winter City Appreciation Event in Spring of 2017 and the annual Edmonton in Bloom Awards on August 24, 2017.

Future Steps:

- Introduce and promote the Canada 150 category for Front Yards in Bloom, aligning with the nation's Sesquicentennial, or 150th, anniversary following the federal Celebrate Canada period, from June 21 to July 1, 2017
- Re-introduce the Balconies in Bloom photo contest within the Front Yards in Bloom program with support from Oliver Community League and Aspen Gardens to engage apartment and condo dwellers in the enhancement of urban green spaces
- Participate in the Canada 150 evaluation category for Communities in Bloom
- Continue to develop and implement a formal volunteer recruitment and management system to meet the needs of the growing Front Yards in Bloom program
- Evaluate and adapt the Front Yards in Bloom: Winterscapes Program for 2018 delivery based on results and feedback from 2014-17
- Continue to implement the Front Yards in Bloom sponsorship program to support program costs and foster participation in city-wide beautification

initiatives by corporate sponsors

Evaluation

Evaluation:

That Edmonton in Bloom continue as a Council Initiative for the following reasons:

- All programs that fall under this Council Initiative are evaluated annually with input from stakeholders and partners.
- After review of the outcomes and metrics associated with Communities in Bloom, Edmonton in Bloom, and Front Yards in Bloom, it is apparent that participation from citizens, not-for-profit organizations, and the business community continues to grow, signalling a continuous increase in interest for this initiative over time.
- All media coverage for Edmonton in Bloom programs during the duration of the Council Initiative has been positive in nature, supporting the corporate reputation for the City of Edmonton.
- The Front Yards in Bloom program receives thousands of commendations annually from participants and nominees.

Table 1: Edmonton in Bloom Metrics from 2014-2017:

	2014	2015	2016
Nominations through Front Yards in Bloom	3,952	4,221	5,022
Unique residences nominated in Front Yards in Bloom	2,950	3,556	4,271
Attended Edmonton in Bloom awards	400	350	350
Awards presented at Edmonton in Bloom Awards ceremony	56	57	54
Participating community leagues	39	53	43

Recommendations:

- To ensure sustainability of the program, focus should continue on the sponsorship program for Front Yards in Bloom, including the creation of a sponsorship plan which will help direct Administration on which corporations to engage and how to most effectively engage them.
- Winterscapes has not seen significant growth in participation since being launched so in fall 2017 an evaluation will be completed to

determine whether the program will continue in its current format, change to focus more on public landscapes, or potentially be discontinued.

Transition:

Transition meetings between Administration and Council are planned. Further recommendations will be made upon completion of the transition meetings. Transition information will be prepared in time for Administration to report at the July 2017 City Council meeting.