

America in Bloom 2016 EVALUATION REPORT

Community: Henderson County, North Carolina

Population Category: 30,000-50,000

Evaluation Dates: June 27-28, 2016

Judges: Karin Rindal and Pam Turrell



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 evaluation criteria are adjusted to the climate and environmental conditions of the community's location.

This Evaluation Report is based upon your community's efforts in each of the following criteria:

Criteria	Possible Points	Actual Points
1. Floral Displays	175.00	140.00
2. Landscaped Areas	175.00	145.00
3. Urban Forestry	175.00	132.00
4. Environmental Efforts	175.00	132.00
5. Heritage Preservation	175.00	140.00
6. Overall Impression	125.00	101.00
Total	1000	790.00
%	79.00	
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%

Community representatives to receive the evaluation report:

Name: Mia Freeman	Title: American in Bloom Chair	Email: miasandmore@yahoo.com
Name: Carol Elliott	Title: American in Bloom Chair	Email: celliott192@yahoo.com
Name: Karen Baker	Title: Asst. Director Hendersonville Visitor Center	Email: kbaker@historichendersonville.org

General Observations and Recommendations:

Congratulations to Henderson County on your third year in the America in Bloom National Awards Program. You should be very proud of all that you have accomplished. This year you moved up the ranks to a 4 bloom rating. There were a number of new projects in 2015-6 that included additions to the Flat Rock Park landscape, improvements to the Jackson Park community gardens, upgrades to Jump Off Park, extensions of the Oklawaha trail and three new murals.

Henderson County's evaluation offers a look at three different sized towns: Hendersonville, Flat Rock and Laurel Park. Emphasis was on Hendersonville being the largest with 14,000 residents. Tourism is a big focus here as visitors can be lured from those visiting the Biltmore and touring the nearby Smoky Mountains.

Hendersonville's meandering Main Street, once a four lane road, now offers chances to pause at many seating spaces and among varied plantings in raised containers. Downtown has many examples of late 19th and early 20th century store fronts. It is a 14-block area lined with shops. Downtown Hendersonville's shop locator map is well done. We enjoyed taking a short break in the comfy chairs of the lovely tourist center.

To further encourage tourism, *you might want to see about adding a route through the three towns in the county area to the driving options at the following website.* <http://visitappalachia.com/driving-tours/>.

In 2015 the Blue Ridge Farm District Marketing Association received a grant to increase its advertising efforts in order to work further to reverse a trend in farm acreage loss. Its marketing efforts help retail apple growers sell over \$1M in gross revenue every season. *You might also want to get more Henderson County locations added to the Bon Appetit Appalachia map that is distributed in the various Edible magazines thorough out Appalachia.* (See <http://www.ediblesubscriptions.com/collections/entire-community>)

We hope you will continue to identify target goals/project each year and implement them. AIB is about bringing together a larger group by pulling from existing groups with a shared interest in overall goals. One target could be creating more evidence of partnership and less fragmentation. *A way to implement this goal is through the naming of an AIB community flower.* (See Floral Displays for more information). At the same time benchmark communities with each other and set up projects the other might be lacking.

Though you have a large area to cover for the judges' tour, *try and pick tour stops that are closer together so that 45 minutes does not need to be spent driving from one point to another. Shorten travel time by picking key sites closer together with an emphasis on community, not state and federal locations. That way more evidence of positive developments within a criteria can be presented or conversely sites for which you would like our recommendations on specific improvements can be viewed. We also typically meet with more municipal representatives who have different roles in the community.* This helps provide a full perspective on services, particularly in the criteria of environment.

Many thanks to each of the officers of your America in Bloom effort, the volunteers, town staff, businesses, as well as elected leaders for welcoming us so warmly into the county. We hope this evaluation provides you with food for thought on projects for next year. Let us know if we can help during the coming year in contributing to further improvements in Henderson County.

1. Floral Displays

Flower beds, containers, planters, baskets, window boxes, trellises. Arrangement, originality, distribution, location, diversity, balance, harmony, quality of maintenance. Use and integration of annuals, perennials, ornamental grasses, bulbs, tropical plants, and seasonal flowers and colorful foliage that provide year-round interest.	Max points	Actual Score
Municipal		
Leadership and plan of action for floral displays	20	15
Concept and design, variety of plantings, overall effect	20	15
Maintenance and quality of displays	20	16
Design for all seasons	15	14
Business		
Concept and design, overall effect	15	14
Maintenance and quality of displays	15	13
Residential		
Concept and design, overall effect	15	12
Maintenance and quality of displays	15	12
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement in design, planting, and maintenance of floral displays	20	15
Financial and in-kind contributions to floral displays	20	14
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	140.00

Observations and Recommendations:

In Hendersonville, downtown planters, hanging baskets, and raised beds along the serpentine section of Main Street display color along the business district route. Pops of color were added with the large containers planted by the city. Some of the businesses along the main street plant their own containers filled with annuals.

Flat Rock floral displays were represented primarily by the Hubba Hubba Smokehouse's patio full of window-boxes, interesting containers and other areas offering up a lively mix of petunias and geraniums, along with accent flowers. Flowers creatively hid unattractive features like restaurant dumpsters.

Consider selecting a Henderson County flower or color for a blossom to achieve a greater sense of unity. Sunflowers might be a choice for Henderson Co. This because it adds



consistency and shows how much a community is behind the effort by the prevalence of the selected flower. It is like wearing team colors at a sporting event for creating camaraderie.



The plantings directly around the municipal building were well done (photo) and it is our understanding that they are maintained by the city. Blue or purple is a color that works well against the background cream and red-brown brick wall.



Some areas in downtown Hendersonville would benefit from additional pops of color as there were some blank spots (photo left). Consider carrying through, as mentioned above, either a specific flower or the colors at the municipal building through downtown. In this instance an additional trailing vine to soften the corners would be visually attractive.

Perhaps by now the hanging baskets have filled out in downtown Hendersonville. Some of the baskets were exposed and *looked as if they might need a refresh of their coir lining. Exposed containers will dry out faster and require more frequent watering. Here is detailed information from a fellow population category entrant about how they establish their hanging baskets each year:*

“The baskets contain multiple varieties of Supertunia™. Baskets are all 20” wide and they use an eco-mat liner that helps retain water. Baskets are planted in the middle of March with Baccto High Porosity potting soil, left on the ground (bottom heat to encourage strong roots) for about a month and trimmed back to edge of basket around the 2nd week of April when they are hung up in the greenhouse.



The baskets receive a slow release fertilizer (Jack’s Classic Classicote and Iron Plus) at the time of planting, when being hung and before the Park District picks up the baskets at the end of May. While at the greenhouse the baskets are fertilized with liquid feed (Jack’s Classic Petunia feed) 2-3 times a week depending on weather.

Finally, baskets are taken down and placed outside on the ground to acclimate to temperature and wind between 1-2 weeks before the Park District picks up the baskets from the greenhouse. The Park District fertilizes once a week during the outdoor season.”

Perhaps the owner of Hubba Hubba could teach a class in container design and maintenance. He must have a favorite fertilizer...maybe it comes from the chickens that roam the property or composted food scraps... that makes his flowers look so healthy that he can share with other businesses in Hendersonville, Laurel Park, and Flat Rock.

Floral plantings at the Park at Flat Rock were still quite immature but looked like they will be bringing more color to this area of the park soon.



At the Biltmore in Asheville, staff is doing interesting things using succulents and tropicals in containers for color (photo). Borrow ideas like this to help local efforts. Perhaps one of their gardeners might come and offer some assistance in establishing container “recipes” that work well in the area based on their experience.



Jump Off Rock Park could benefit from some color under its entrance signage (photo on right) and in the new round in the center. Low flowering natives would keep with the natural theme of the vista beyond.

It is common for housing subdivisions in Henderson Co. to have a large entrance sign identifying their name. *Consider an initiative where residents take on planting flowers at the base of their signage. This could be encouraged with an annual contest for the winner.*

2. Landscaped Areas

Overall design and suitability of landscape, turf, and ground covers. Use of native and introduced plants. Good use of design principles (i.e., balance of plant material and constructed elements, harmony, color, texture, shape, focal points, etc.). Sustainability. Integration of lighting, hardscapes, and site elements such as lamp posts, water features, drinking fountains, bicycle racks, benches, trash/recycling receptacles, etc. Maintenance (weeds, mulching practices, edging). Site rejuvenation and rehabilitation. Efforts in strategic planning. Community gardens, children's gardens, healing gardens, pollinator gardens, Backyard Wildlife Habitat, Audubon, and other specialty public gardens and zoos.	Max points	Actual Score
Municipal		
Overall design and planting of landscape, turf and groundcovers	15	14
Environmental management of sports fields and turf	15	13
Quality of landscape maintenance	15	13
Sustainable management, naturalization and eco-design	15	13
Business		
Overall design and planting of landscape	15	13
Management of turf and groundcovers	10	7
Quality of landscape maintenance	15	13
Residential		
Overall design and planting of landscape	15	11
Management of turf and groundcovers	15	11
Quality of landscape maintenance	15	11
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement, i.e. garden clubs, neighborhood groups, Master Gardeners and University extension, in funding, planting, and maintenance of landscaped areas	15	13
Participation in future planning (committees, councils, and advisory boards.)	15	13
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	145.00

Observations and Recommendations:

Bullington Garden started by Bob Bullington as an ornamental nursery where he focused on growing Asian trees and shrubs. Mature specimens of Japanese maples, Tanyosho Japanese red pine, kousa dogwoods, Japanese stewartia, paper bark maples, and a Japanese pagoda tree are still on the grounds. Today Bullington Garden is home to a multi-faceted gardening program run by John Murphy.



There are various themed gardens, including a labelled herb garden, water feature garden, and a pollinator garden that is in the process of being re-done. Other elements include a rain garden, shade garden, perennial border, and therapy gardens.



These elements work to engage people of all age levels. Each high school special-needs grade level has a raised garden bed to plant and tend. Middle schoolers, who are just starting the program, have a straw bale to plant. There are two indoor classroom setups: one traditional and one in a greenhouse setting. Here students journal (photo) about their gardening activities.

The most innovative aspect is the garden therapy program for mainstreamed at-risk kids. Small teams join together to discuss themes, their appropriateness and feasibility. Then they select a theme. Projects are submitted for approval by Mr. Murphy. Students are given a budget to implement their themed design. As the semester goes on, they care for their garden. Ultimately a winner is chosen by a panel of judges based on execution of the

theme and the quality of the plantings.

This year's winner was "Star Wars" the dark and light side with a twig bridge between the two sides. The garden on the right is the Veterans Garden with red poppies made from plastic cups. Theme selections were all highly creative.



The garden serves the entire community with other youth and adult education classes. The regular age-appropriate classes are curriculum approved by the state. There is also another greenhouse for seedling stars with a noted dahlia expert as a regular volunteer. At-risk youth help Mr. Murphy with general garden maintenance of these areas. A nature trail is appropriately signed.

More adaptive tools would be a benefit in the garden. See <http://www.kidsgardening.org/2016-youth-garden-grant-winners/> for grant money, as well as the final link in the Environmental criteria list of grants.

Since the Henderson County is working to attract retirees, *Bullington or some other location would also benefit from permanent site for senior horticultural therapy.* There are apparently other horticulture therapy programs in the area that we did not visit, nor are they mentioned in the profile, including Veterans Healing

Farm (<http://veteranshealingfarm.org>) and St. Gerard House (<http://stgerardhouse.org>) for teens and adults on the autism spectrum.

This year trails, playground equipment, and a picnic shelter were added to the Park at Flat Rock. Residents voted for this 67+ acres of parkland, converted from a golf course, to be a passive, natural park with walking trails and picnic areas. The park began a reforestation project, the building of a picnic pavilion, and recently completed children's playground, with funding from a local foundation. The park is being rehabbed in phases. At mid-summer the Flat Rock town council approved other improvements including a "Quiet Place" (an open pavilion for meditation), nature center, secondary walking trails connecting the existing 1.3-mile perimeter trail, an observation deck, and two bridges over streams. *A labyrinth garden nearby would be a complimentary landscaping feature in a meditative setting.*

(For garden examples, see <https://www.labyrinthcompany.com/collections/glt>)

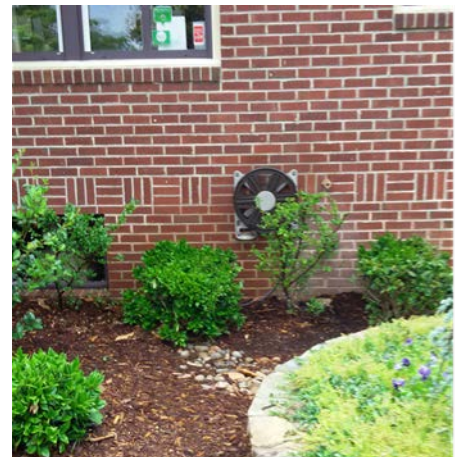
To add whimsy, the children's playground could benefit from a tunnel or a teepee structure made entirely from natural materials, like a living one from tall sunflowers and flowering vines. An unconventional tree house would be another unique attraction.

Jackson Park also upgraded their community gardens. A children's sand box in the garden was refurbished with the help of donations.

This year Jump Off Park revamped and redesigned the entrance of the park. Railings that echo the distant mountain ranges are a very nice touch. To invite people to linger and soak in the fabulous panoramic vista, *the site could use benches. This could be a way to re-use wood from trees you plan to cut in the area. (See Urban Forestry).* Adding a fixed binocular stand would also be fun.

Rhododendron Lake Nature Park is a 3-acre conservancy of native plants built by volunteers and funded with grant dollars and donations. Volunteers planted 130 native trees and 200 bushes. The lake serves to filter the water runoff from surrounding neighborhoods. Here Boy Scouts learn about invasive plants. In exchange for removing them from the park, they hold their jamboree in the park. Future phases will add ADA accessible walking trails. A stream fording has old recycled granite curbing from a nearby community.

Burntshirt Winery's gardens are overall very well landscaped and a good model, except that in one instance a thorny pyracantha is right in front of the hose reel (photo). *While they are good ornamental plants their dense thorny structure makes them better suited to an area that people do not need to access regularly. Since they can grow to 20 ft. tall there might be a better place on the grounds to reposition this while it is still young. Perhaps next to a bird feeder where its denseness provides additional habitat.* Pyracantha berries are mildly poisonous.



Sierra Nevada Brewing is in a commerce park that requires achieving a level of LEED certification. Even the parking lot on the grounds is attractively planted with drought-tolerant natives. The areas surrounding the facility are planted in native meadows. The buildings were built with stone and wood harvested on the property. Twelve cisterns installed around the facility store harvested rainwater used to water the landscaping. The grounds include a vegetable garden maintained by Sierra Nevada employees.

Margaret's Garden on the Sandburg National Park service site, though workers were diligently working, seemed to be in a bit of disrepair. The chain link fence distracted from its potential charm. *Interpretive materials would have been helpful with a plant list if it was striving to be a historically-accurate garden.* Contact former AIB participant Tarboro, NC to discuss their historic garden on the grounds of the Blount Bridgers House. See <https://www.facebook.com/Blount-Bridgers-Historic-Garden-124495810929707/>.

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, Tree City USA and their Growth Award. Efforts in management, planning, maintenance, improvement, and innovation. Written policies, bylaws and regulations, long- and short-term plans, trees on private property protected.	Max points	Actual Score
Municipal		
Overall plan of action, tree planting programs, variety of species, inventory	20	16
Tree maintenance	15	13
Preservation and restoration of natural areas	15	14
Tree protection/planting regulations and by-laws	15	12
Business		
Overall planting program	20	13
Tree maintenance	15	11
Residential		
Overall planting program	20	15
Tree maintenance	15	12
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement in funding, planting, and maintenance of trees (i.e. Tree City USA)	20	15
Volunteer involvement of youth in tree programs (i.e., Arbor Day, etc.)	20	11
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	132.00

Observations and Recommendations:

As the elevation climbs from 1,000 feet, Laurel Park's climate changes and it holds greater tree diversity than surrounding areas. The hilltop has 12 different types of oak. *In Laurel Park we encourage the implementation of a tree inventory.* Tree removal is controlled via ordinance but only on public property or rights of way, not on private property.

The community is planning to open up the hilltop vista in Jump Off Park to what it once was, by removing hickory, poplar, and locust trees. Some removal is being financed by a wedding photography fee. *Consider careful review of tree removal since too much can create erosion problems and change habitat diversity.* For trees that are cut down, *turn some of the wood over to a carver to make Jump Off Park commemorative fundraising items like bottle stoppers shaped like pileated woodpeckers or other bird species or other items that would appeal to brides as a memento or party favor since this is a popular wedding photography spot. The wood could also be turned into rustic benches.*

The downtown streets of Hendersonville are nicely laid out with many chances to sit and enjoy the young trees and plantings. The Park at Flat Rock has had tree replacements *but more could be added as a commemorative program, since the park relies heavily on donations. While most communities focus on a tree donation for someone's passing, consider working with local hospitals to establish a program and fund for commemorative trees when a child is born.* Then as the child and tree grow, a bond and appreciation can be established, as well as a learning opportunity.

We discussed proper pruning. *One of the best guides for more information is Cornell University's booklet Pruning: An illustrated guide to pruning ornamental trees and shrubs. See <http://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/pdfs/PruningGuideOrnamentals.pdf> .* There is also information about urban tree-well construction. An urban environment is hard on any tree. See [http://water.rutgers.edu/Green Infrastructure Guidance Manual/DOWNLOAD.html](http://water.rutgers.edu/Green%20Infrastructure%20Guidance%20Manual/DOWNLOAD.html) *page 12 for detailed information about how to engineer a tree-well in an urban environment to provide for better survival. Tree ring maintenance consistency is an issue. Avoid having situations with grass growing right up to the trunk. This invites trunk damage when riding movers come too close to the trunk. While some advocate no grass throughout the entire dripline of tree, a minimum two foot "buffer" is more practical (see well done example from Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania to the right).*



In one of seven North Carolina educational state forests, the "talking" trees were a very unique interactive educational experience. Numerous educational programs are offered by rangers in Holmes State Educational Forest Park.

It would be helpful if a comprehensive list of programs were available on the website but the link came up blank. The public would likely need some further description of the programs offered rather than just the title. Intriguing titles included Tree Growth Rings, What We Get from Trees, How Paper Comes from Trees, and tree ID class. A teacher workshop regarding Project Learning Tree is available. It would have been nice to see a school in Henderson County where the elements of Project Learning Tree were in place - <https://forestry.ces.ncsu.edu/ncplt/> .

Note however that a visit to a state forest does not influence scoring under municipal, residential, or business categories.

The committee would benefit from having an individual dedicated to collecting information on trees in the county. There was not mention of any heritage tree identification or tree labelling effort, though there certainly are ones that might qualify, like this specimen in Bullington Garden (photo on right).



4. Environmental Efforts

Sustainability practices. Recycling (paper, glass, metal, plastic, electronics, clothing, etc.), transfer/recycle stations, 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, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), 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	20
Effective communication of environmental strategies and initiatives	25	19
New programs, improvement and innovation	25	20
Business		
Participation in environmental efforts	20	16
New programs, improvement and innovation	10	8
Residential		
Participation in environmental efforts	20	14
New programs, improvement and innovation	10	7
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement in environmental efforts	20	14
Youth participation in environmental activities	20	14
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	132.00

Observations and Recommendations:

The environmental measures of local business, Sierra Nevada, are exemplary, as are those of Tri-Hishtil Growers, which captures the rain from greenhouse roofs and runs it through a special system. Other local businesses should be encouraged to follow their lead. *Perhaps Sierra Nevada employees can mentor other local businesses. Warehouse structures and restaurants should be a focus.*

This year Hendersonville finished the Oklawaha trail connecting its parks. We also toured the newly created nature trail at the Park at Flat Rock. This is a very positive addition to the environmental educational resources in the area.

One element in storm water management that appears to be missing is a program with residents and businesses introducing rain barrels. Here are some North Carolina-based rain barrel purchase sites, as they can be expensive to ship. <http://www.rainbarrelintl.com/products.asp> and <http://www.benchmarkrainbarrels.com/just-barrels.html>. (The later site uses old pickle barrels as rain barrels). An example of a North Carolina city rain barrel program is:

<http://soilwater.nhcgov.com/programs/rain-barrels/>

While recycling bins were in evidence they would not be adequate for large scale events. *AIB participant Tarboro, NC has a large portable recycling bin with a trailer attachment to take to city events. As in other areas of environmental concern, it would useful to collect statistics on usage and participation, and work to then benchmark increases in recycling levels each year.*

The walkability index for the area is low. It has not been documented for all areas but one section comes up with an index of 7. See <https://www.walkscore.com/walkable-neighborhoods.shtml>. One area that could be addressed is increased transportation from airport, as well as introducing a trolley-type bus that could run between the different town centers and other important stops like the playhouse, Sandburg home, and other key sites. Consider <http://www.surdna.org/what-we-fund/funding-overview.html> as a source of funding for “Sustainable Transportation Networks and Equitable Development Patterns” as listed in their grant guidelines.

This year Hendersonville finished the Oklawaha trail connecting its parks. We also toured the newly created nature trail at the Park at Flat Rock. These are very positive additions to the environmental educational resources in the area.

We saw few bike racks during our visit. As an environmental initiative, increasing bike usage is proving to be a useful component to help downtowns revitalize further. *We encourage the installation of decorative bike racks that have a sculptural element that is reminiscent of the town’s heritage and encourage the use of bicycles as a mode of transportation. Perhaps Sierra Nevada would be willing to donate the money for two bike racks downtown.*

A bicycle race/marathon around the Park at Flat Rock could help increase awareness and interest in cycling, as well as bring a new category of visitors to town. You could also encourage increased biking efforts by employing efforts like those of Tour De Bike Lane. This is an effort to build camaraderie among bicyclists with cheering squads and monthly social rides organized through a Facebook page. See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/tripping/wp/2016/06/20/tour-de-bike-lane/>

Waiting to expand your trail system because you are waiting for a business to move into the unoccupied facility, is not current economic development thinking. See <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/2016/06/28/introducing-amazing-place/> *This site proves a rationale to support moving ahead with the project now. Consider adding opportunities for water, rest, and concessions. Establish a safe place for food trucks to park along the way. In terms of trail expansion in other areas of the community, we realize it might be a little bit of a challenge but to be sure more residents have easier access to trails, acquiring easements for a trail uphill to the top of Laurel Park would put an amenity in this area of the county.*

To link and expand the existing trails in Henderson County, look to Rails to Trails information on funding for eligible projects. <http://www.railstotrails.org/build-trails/trail-building-toolbox/acquisition/financing-and-funding/>.

We did not see the electric car charging stations in Hendersonville funded through a grant from the North Carolina Department of Transportation. *We would recommend that the city acquire at least one electric vehicle and then develop a strategy to encourage the use of electric vehicles.*

Henderson County Agriculture Extension offers training so that pesticide applicators can meet state licensing guidelines. However, we were concerned to learn that on occasion glyphosate is sprayed for weed control near a water source.

While at Rhododendron Lake Park we discussed the Bowman's Hill Plant Stewardship Index project in Pennsylvania. While specific to Pennsylvania, *this index could serve as a model for expanding the environmental analysis of the cordoned-off area in the park, in an effort to accurately determine its ultimate restoration potential.* See <http://www.bhwp.org/plant-stewardship-index.htm>

In redoing the pollinator garden at Bullington Gardens you might want to research whether native vs. non-native cultivars are best for attracting pollinators.

Additional sources of pollinator garden information are:

- http://www.pollinator.org/pollinator_week_2015.htm to organize a related local event (perhaps this could be a new festival subject);
- <http://www.gardencentermarketing.com/page/Pollinator-garden-Challenge-Signage> promoting the national initiative by encouraging your local gardening center to incorporate signage so the public is aware of the varieties to choose. <http://www.treehugger.com/lawn-garden/help-monarch-butterflies-diy-milkweed-seed-bombs.html> for instructions on a DIY milkweed seed bomb project that could be held at the library or extension office.
- Finally and most significantly <http://millionpollinatorgardens.org/> where you can register the garden once re-established with the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge.

We noticed literature on monarchs available to the public in the classroom at Bullington Garden. This is a great step. *A larger more obvious display would be helpful.*

Jackson Park consists of 250 acres of diverse habitat located in downtown Hendersonville and includes creeks, ponds, bottomland, willow and alder thickets, meadows, mixed pine-hardwood, and pine habitats. The park attracts an outstanding variety of migrating birds in spring and fall, the best times to bird in the park. To date, the park bird list contains a remarkable 196 species of birds. *Consider more publicity, and informational sessions, about importance of protecting bird habitat and reducing the threat of global warming—which is particularly dangerous to birds that live at higher elevations. If climate change alters their habitat, they will be lost to the area.*

Birding can help Henderson County's efforts to attract seniors since it is a favorite activity. *You can attract this demographic of people with more signage related to birding, bird count stations, signage related to bird habitats and a birding-related event, e.g. a pileated woodpecker festival. Another option would be to add a special bird-related tour brochure at the tourist center. An app that pulls out Henderson County-only sightings from this following site <https://www.carolinabirdclub.org/sightings/> would be an attraction to potential re-locators and tourists with this hobby. Verizon funds a high school grant program encouraging students to develop phone apps that benefit the community. (See <http://www.verizon.com/about/responsibility/verizon-foundation> for more information on this grant.)*

In terms of youth activities and education, a junior master gardener program/4-H club was established for 17 youth. Participants learn about the environment, recycling, and propagation. The club is supported by a donation from the adult Master Gardener volunteers and includes a summer camp. Parents reported an increased communication with their children about environmental issues so the program will be continued. In

the spring, over 600 students in K-3 participated in a Bullington Garden's program to learn about pollination and invasives. Thirty nine youth, ages 11-16, worked over the summer alongside adult volunteers to tend the prize winning goats on the Sandburg National Historic Site.

Consider implementing a "Project Wet" curriculum to complement "Project Learning Tree" to educate young people about water usage and river protection. See <http://www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/projwet.htm> National information is available at <http://www.projectwet.org/what-we-do> .

On the community level, Laurel Park is working on removing invasives, including ivy and oriental bittersweet, as well as getting the word out to full-time and seasonal residents. A local councilman is a horticulturist and he is working with town maintenance workers on enhancing their environmental education level. Invasive are a significant problem across Henderson County. Many roadsides have excessive ivy growth and kudzu. *A more organized "invasive combat team" and/or enlisting Boy Scouts or youth offenders for regular control forays are necessary.*

While different entities in Henderson County have received grant money related to enhancing environmental efforts, people expressed an interest in learning about additional sources. *Here are several sources of grant funding for to consider, if they have not already done so:*

- ☐ Cornell Douglas Foundation Grants <http://www.cornelldouglas.org/>
- ☐ Campus Progress Action Alliance Grants
<http://web.eenorthcarolina.org/resource/about.aspx?s=102969.0.0.37430> ;
- ☐ Funding Factory Recycling and Fundraising Program
<http://web.eenorthcarolina.org/resource/about.aspx?s=101530.0.0.37430>
- ☐ Norcross Wildlife Foundation Grant
<http://web.eenorthcarolina.org/resource/about.aspx?s=83963.0.0.37430>

Many more environmental grant options for North Carolinians in specific and, at the national level, are listed at <http://web.eenorthcarolina.org/core/item/topic.aspx?tid=85010> (This link may need to be cut and pasted into a browser as it refreshes itself monthly and is the one discussed during our visit.) We also briefly discussed <http://foundationcenter.org/find-funding> and its grant database.

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; historical trees, artifacts; historical society; heritage advisory committee, museums, archives, history books, land trusts/conservation easements and interpretative programs; ordinances and policies including protection of structures/sites from demolition/development. Resource availability. Farmers markets, festivals and parades.	Max Points	Actual Score
Municipal		
Leadership in preservation and restoration initiatives	25	20
Legal protection of heritage sites	25	20
Resource availability for preservation and restoration	25	18
Business		
Conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of properties	15	13
Participation in and support of heritage/cultural activities	15	12
Residential		
Conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of properties	15	12
Participation in and support of heritage/cultural activities	15	13
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement in cultural, historical, and natural heritage activities	20	17
Youth involvement in heritage activities	20	15
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	140.00

Observations and Recommendations:

Hendersonville and Flat Rock's efforts to preserve and promote their history are successful with programs in place to mark, celebrate, preserve, and reuse historic sites. Each of these towns has unique features and important things to preserve. Both have consistent and clear signage on historical buildings. Flat Rock is so lucky to have resident Louise Howe Bailey who has made it her mission to record local history through a regular newspaper column and other writings. Another historic asset is the Baker-Barber Photo collection.

The Hendersonville Courthouse is home to the not-for-profit Henderson County Heritage Museum. Built in 1905, it is manned by volunteers and houses rotating exhibits that include a rotating a Lego display and a large tribute to the town's veterans and general history. Highlights include the rotating veteran's history display donated and maintained by a local judge, the recreation of the Sheppard Store with its original cash register, donated by a local citizen, and a portrait of Supreme Court Justice John Marshall.

The museum is supported by an enthusiastic and dedicated team of volunteers including Tara Hill, a senior historian. This makes it possible to offer many of their programs for free. She and her team offer a great service to Henderson County residents and visitors. *The schedule of rotating exhibits could draw on a traveling*

Smithsonian Program that can be found at <http://www.sites.si.edu/host/list.htm#history> and be funded by a grant <http://www.sites.si.edu/funding/grant2.htm>. The following is a link to a comprehensive database that provides other museum grants. See <https://www.ims.gov/grants/apply-grant/available-grants>

Flat Rock Historic District includes Beaumont Estates, which was established by Charlestonians as summer homes to get away from the malaria and disease on the coast. It was referred to as "Little Charleston of the Mountains." The entire district of Flat Rock is included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Every year the Historic Flat Rock Home Tour is held to fundraise to support Flat Rock preservation efforts. Flat Rock has a preservation fund that is used to buy historic houses in disrepair. The houses are repaired and preserved and prepared for sale.

Last year Flat Rock's expanded the boundary of its National Historic Register designation after painstakingly documenting the conditions of hundreds of historic properties dating from 1827 to 1964. Six hundred and ten buildings, structures, objects and sites were included in the submittal.

There are currently no plans to implement any type of ordinances that would protect designated homes. Hendersonville does have a process that requires a certificate of appropriateness for any changes in its historic district. *Consider going a step beyond and reconstructing the most significant homes that were demolished.* The Baker Barber photo collection that provided interesting discoveries should yield clues for this effort.

Historic Flat Rock (HFR) has since the early 1970s worked to restore and maintain nearly 20 historic properties in Flat Rock often renovations include a garden revitalization. Restored properties are then resold to private individuals.

Some of these homes do have Preservation Agreements.

The Village Hall, which is in the Stradley-Jones farmhouse, is the organization's first adaptive reuse of a historic structure. Historic markers stand on properties that have Preservation Agreements. Markers are funded by HFR. *The historic homes would also be a wonderful venue for establishing a Henderson County in Bloom fundraiser or volunteer appreciation event.*

Take advantage of the wealth of Rhododendrons native to the area. *Model a Rhododendron Festival after some of the DC cherry blossom events. Include* <http://www.rhododendron.org/chapters.asp?ID=60&Chapter=Southeastern> *American Rhododendron Society local chapter in organizing of AIB for Henderson Co. You could also host a national meeting of the society. Another option for a flower-related event would be a dahlia or hydrangea festival.*

Two cycling events worth investigating for adaption to Henderson County include Cycle to Farm and Pedal to Plate. These rides tour local farms by bicycle and offer participants food samples and chances to buy directly from local producers. Volunteers collect the purchases and bring them to a final pickup point. The ride ends with a farm-to-table meal. *Sierra Nevada is already equipped to be the ending point for such a meal.* In some towns, proceeds benefit local greenway projects and construction of a greenhouse for a local school. This offers an opportunity to encourage biking, to promote the local farming community which has such a strong presence in Henderson and to raise funds for Henderson County in Bloom projects.

For a more strenuous course HIB could have a "Tour de Laurel Hill" that was more competitive.

A historic marker project began in 2008.

There are many elements of Henderson County to play off of for more events. *You could hold a blue grass concert on Jump of Rock or do storytelling about Indian lore there.* Early home builders that contributed to the emergence of Flat Rock were wealthy rice farms from South Carolina. Perhaps there could be some kind of festival or food dish honoring this. *An Indian heritage day would help attract visitors. Other possibilities based on experiences or encounters during our visit include a: wild turkey day, woodpecker festival involving wood carvers or ice sculptures in the winter, or a Scottish and Irish celebration commemorating this ethnicity of early settlers.* Events provide an opportunity to publicize about Henderson in Bloom and recruit more volunteers to be directly involved in HIB activities and programs.

The booklet about the commemorative quilt in the town hall in Flat Rock is very well done graphically and highly informative. *It would have been nice to have historical information next the corresponding panel in addition to information about the individual artisan who executed it. . Hosting the national quilting society is another quilt-related idea. AIB participant Ottawa, IL has planted a quilt pattern garden next to its history museum in year's past. AIB participant Belpre, OH is another community with a strong interest in quilting. They have a quilter's tour organized by a local quilting shop.*

Hendersonville, Laurel Park, Flat Rock, and Mill River all have farmer's markets on varying days of the week, though we did not visit any as they are usually from Thursday through Sat. According to a published article on the subject, Flat Rocks Farmers Market does have an emphasis on chemical-free, sustainably-grown produce.

New history is being created with a growing number of breweries and cider works in the area. Tours, guides, and transportation alternatives are offered. A tie-in with agriculture would be to seek out and help growers of "add-ins" to the brewing and cider making process locate their crops in Henderson County. This could include harvests like hops and ginger. Good quality hops are in particular high demand across the country due to the influx of craft breweries. Add-ins to brewing grown close reduces transportation costs. *Check on hops-growing grants for produce farmers <http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/farm-bill-programs-and-grants/> . In particular, the Value-added Producer grant program would be of interest. <http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/local-food-systems-rural-development/value-added-producer-grants/>. On your "Cheers! Trail" consider introducing hops-growing or ginger-growing locations once established.*

A guide offers seasonal information on more than 40 different local fruits and vegetables and retail stands and stores. Apples are the top local crop, along with tomatoes and sweet corn. *A fall historic barn tour might be another fundraising opportunity with a discussion of crops that they grow and associated demonstration plot.*

6. Overall Impression

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/recycling 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, public art, wayfinding signs, graphic elements such as banners, signs and murals.	Max points	Actual Score
Municipal		
Overall cleanliness	10	9
Maintenance of public roads and shoulders	10	9
Condition of public buildings and properties	10	9
Impact of graphic elements - banners, wayfinding signs, murals, etc.	10	7
Business		
Overall cleanliness	20	17
Condition of buildings and properties	20	17
Residential		
Overall cleanliness	10	7
Condition of buildings and properties	10	6
Community Involvement		
Participation in clean-up efforts, adopt-a-spot, annual cleanup days, etc.	15	13
Recognition of volunteer efforts	10	7
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	125.00	101.00

Observations and Recommendations:

Adding visual interest to its downtown, Hendersonville currently hosts the Bearfootin' Art Walk and Auction with 21 artists' unique representations of decorated bear sculptures. It offers both photo opportunities and fundraising. Bears will be sold off at auction in the fall. The activity has a nicely-done brochure depicting each bear with information about it, as well as a corresponding map identifying the bear's current display location. Sponsors include a broad cross section of the community and each bear is highly unique. One bear even has a little "Where's Waldo"-type printed checklist guide that invites children to find the drawings of other animals decorating it and check them off. This is a very creative combination of visual art and interactive education about local fauna.

This year new murals were also added to downtown Hendersonville. An expansive one honoring veterans is still in process but nearly complete. Two historically-accurate Coca-Cola advertisement murals were funded by Coke Consolidated Bottles of Charlotte as part of their Community Initiative Mural Program. This addition grew Main Street Hendersonville by another block. A video of the mural recreation is on YouTube.

Downtown Hendersonville might also benefit from an outdoor piano to make it a more impromptu gathering spot or enlist a local merchant to be the “keeper” of game pieces for assorted game boards sprayed onto the tops of some of the tables scattered throughout town.

The Apple Tree sculpture by the Coca-Cola murals commemorates the importance of this historic crop for the region. At the nearby storeowner’s request, the city recently enhanced the lighting of the sculpture so it is visible at night. *Other towns in the county should consider adding outdoor art as well. For downtown Flat Rock something commemorating its history would be appropriate and for Laurel Park either something evoking nature or the installation of a kinetic/moving sculpture would add interest and help reinforce a key unique element that its community has to offer. The Park at Flat Rock seems the perfect venue for “nest art”. Perhaps not on such a large scale, but see examples at this link - <https://modernreston.com/2015/04/ten-fun-facts-about-patrick-doughertys-monumental-new-sculpture-at-reston-town-center/>. People enjoy having interesting settings or objects for photo opportunities. Sometimes, as in the “Love” sculpture in Philadelphia, they come to an area just to take a picture with unique art that develops a following.*

We discussed the Edgecombe Community College’s EarthWorks nature trail art project in Tarboro, NC during our visit to Holmes State Educational Forest Park. EarthWorks is a student-directed art project where sculptures are created along the trail made of natural materials and integrated into the woodland, so that sometimes you really have to look hard to notice them. Some photo examples are provided in this gallery <http://www.edgecombe.edu/gallery/wetlands-wildlife-along-the-trail/> George Anderson, ECC Sustainability Coordinator could provide additional information. *This would be a way to achieve greater youth involvement in the park.*

Laurel Park has a stone wall built by the Civilian Conservation Corp that is still in good repair. *Some make the case that it should actually be treated as a historic structure in order to maintain it. See <http://ncpe.us/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Tassinary.pdf>. While not currently active, there has been grant money for reconstruction of CCC projects in the past.*

For vacant buildings consider encouraging popup galleries since there seems to be larger than average number of artisans in the area, particularly people working in ceramics.

To get greater participation in residential property clean-up, *consider a recognition program for residents with stellar homes. For those that can’t be seen from the road, a photo in the newspaper would help them serve as community examples. It could even be expanded to a contest where there is an entry fee as a fundraiser for Henderson County in Bloom efforts and the winner would receive a gift certificate from a local nursery, produce stand, or restaurant.* Fellow AIB participant Midland, MI’s beautification award program began in the late 1800s and continues to this day with the recent addition of a separate “secret garden” award for backyards that are not visible from the street.

Hendersonville is in the process of evaluating its wayfinding signage. *Contact fellow population category entrant St. Charles, IL about their attractive street signs that include a graphic of their community “symbol.”* In Holmes State Educational Forest Park the talking trees labels were engaging and attractive but other signage needs a redo. *Again contact St. Charles’ Parks Department to talk about their treatment of their large oak tree cross section slice turned into an engaging and attractive educational tool.*

Many other AIB communities have a “Weekly Weeders” group in their communities. The same or separate group of individuals then also checks that dog waste stations have bags. If you having trouble recruiting volunteers to expand the activities of AIB, look to advertise in or getting an article placed in Plough to Pantry magazine

frances@ploughtopantry.com whose target audience would likely be match with the profile of an AIB volunteer.

Checklist:

Yes	No	N/A	
x			Were the judges given a Community Profile, Evaluation Tour Itinerary, and map prior to their arrival?
x			Did the Evaluation Tour Itinerary provide for experiencing a representative cross-section of the community?
x			Were the guides knowledgeable about the community 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 Report in a quiet place?
		x	Were you informed about pollinator gardens? How many? (Please use comments section to add details if necessary.)
x			Was there a wrap-up session at the end of the tour?

Comments:

We asked to see pollinator gardens. Bullington Garden's is being redone. There is a private garden in Hendersonville registered with the Million Pollinator Challenge. (Hal Oliver)

There was a small informal wrap-up session at the final dinner.

DEFINITIONS (determined by who owns and/or manages the property)

Municipal: city hall and other municipal properties, parks and open spaces, roads, roadsides, sidewalks, public cemeteries, public schools/universities/colleges, sports facilities, empty lots and brownfields, libraries, hospitals, public railway and bus stations

Business: commercial and industrial sectors, shopping centers, stores, office buildings, restaurants, mixed use developments, service stations, private railway and bus stations, plant nurseries, garden centers, assisted living/nursing home/graduated care facilities, apartment buildings, hotels, private hospitals, churches, not for profit/civic organizations, private cemeteries, private schools/universities/colleges, residential common areas managed by associations

Residential: single family residences, town houses, individual homes in planned/gated/manufactured home communities, residential neighborhoods or developments

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



2016 Special Mentions 2016 Community Recognitions

Community: Henderson County, NC

Recognized Criterion: Landscaped Areas

Bullington Gardens, Downtown Hendersonville, Burntshirt Winery, Hubba Hubba Smokehouse, and brewery Sierra Nevada all contribute significantly to this criteria being a superlative one for Henderson County. Interesting “round the bend” discoveries happen at Bullington Gardens. Hendersonville draws people to chairs and tables scattered throughout the extent of a landscaped Main Street. Colorful plantings at Hubba Hubba show everyone what is possible in Henderson County when applied with a painterly touch. The Burntshirt Winery plant choices are pleasing visual. Sierra Nevada is a, hopefully, trend-setting example of what an environmentally sensitive company can do with the use of natives in its landscape and contribute to greater plant knowledge in the community through its kitchen/demonstration flower and vegetable garden.

Noteworthy Project or Initiative: Environmental Protection Initiative

To protect the river from agricultural runoff, covered chemical handling stations were constructed in several key locations for trucks to enter and load product. Volunteers, including some from local company Sierra Nevada, reconstructed an access road to prevent sediment runoff using swale, live stakes, and fabric to build it for greater permeability further slowing runoff into a nearby creek. There are also river edge clean-up efforts.

America in Bloom ... Planting Pride in Our Communities
2130 Stella Court, Columbus, OH 43215 • (614) 453-0744 • Fax (614) 487-1216
www.AmericaInBloom.org • aib@AmericaInBloom.org