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## **America in Bloom Judges to Visit Holland, MI**

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Holland, MI on July 27 and 28. This is Holland's fifth entry in the America in Bloom national awards program. The town is one of 42 towns across America working on local revitalization programs with the hopes of receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award.

Holland is competing against Arroyo Grande, CA; Estes Park, CO; and Washington, MO in the mid-sized Circle of Champions category.

All participants are evaluated in the following areas: overall impression, heritage preservation, environmental efforts, urban forestry, landscapes, floral displays, and community involvement. The judges evaluate these criteria in the residential, commercial, and municipal sectors.

Judges are Bill Hahn and Ed Hooker III.



Bill Hahn



Ed Hooker

**Bill Hahn** has served the city of Akron, Ohio for 34 years in various capacities. Since 1993 his title has been City Arborist and Horticulturist. Bill has received several citations for his work including Akron's winning the 2003 America in Bloom national competition for the 101,000-300,000 population category, Neptune Park Historic Restoration, and the Akron Noise Attenuation Project being featured by Scenic America as an "Environmental Solution" to highway noise.

Bill has been a registered Landscape Architect since 1984, and earned an Associates Degree in Ornamental Horticulture from Ohio State University in 1974. He is an environmental enthusiast, is well traveled, visiting many of the national, state and provincial parks, gardens, arboreta and nursery growers. He is member of ONLA, ISA, and Scenic America, serves on the Contest Committee of America in Bloom.

**Ed Hooker** III currently serves as the first Historical Architect of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Veterans Affairs (VA). The NCA oversees 131 National Veterans Cemeteries through the United States and Puerto Rico.

Hooker began his career in federal service in 2006 as the Historic Architect and Cultural Resources Manager at Fort Riley, KS. After graduating from Auburn University with a degree in architecture, he began his career in historic preservation with the Alabama Historical Commission, the Alabama State Historic Preservation Office, where he worked with communities to realize the potential of their threatened historic landmarks. He later was the historic architect for the Mobile Historic Development Commission, where he staffed the city's Architectural Review Board and provided preservation guidance and architectural design assistance to residents of Mobile's 8 historic districts. Hooker credits his passion for historic preservation to growing up in the Black Belt region of Alabama, volunteering as a docent for his community's annual pilgrimage, and being made aware at an early age the importance of heritage and history. He considers himself an avid amateur gardener, and enjoys container and patio gardening. Ed also served for two years on his town's AIB Committee.

Participants have opportunities to receive recognition in the following areas:

- Bloom rating
- Population category winner
- Outstanding achievement award – the “best of the best” over all participants in each of the six evaluated criteria
- Special mention – for what the judges deem to be an extraordinary project or program.
- Special awards
- Population category winners are invited to participate in international competition via the Communities in Bloom program in Canada.
- Community Champion
- YouTube Video Award

To date, more than 240 towns and cities from 41 states have participated in the program and more than 20 million people have been touched by it. Awards will be announced on September 26 at AIB's National Symposium and Awards, held this year in Holland, MI.

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America in Bloom is an independent non-profit 501c3 corporation. America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play – benefiting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage; and planting pride through volunteerism.

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