



# MEDIA RELEASE

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Ottawa, IL America in Bloom National 2013 Awards Results Announced**

(COLUMBUS, OH): After months of anxious waiting, top honors for the prestigious 2013 America in Bloom national awards program were announced at the annual awards held in Orlando, Florida on September 21.

America in Bloom executive director, Laura Kunkle, said, "America in Bloom is helping participants of all types achieve their potential. The accomplishments and progress shown by this year's towns and cities is remarkable."

Ottawa was judged on six criteria: overall impression, environmental awareness, heritage, urban forestry, landscape, and floral displays, across four sectors: municipal, residential, commercial, and community involvement.

Bruce Riggs and Bill Hahn, two specially trained AIB judges, visited towns of similar populations and spent two days touring each town, meeting municipal officials, residents, and volunteers. Other competitors in the 18,001 to 25,000 category were Calabasas, CA and Madisonville, KY.

Ottawa received a four bloom rating.

Riggs and Hahn said, "The re-greening of Ottawa, Illinois's downtown has transformed what was once an overwhelming concrete city island into beds of attractive landscapes, colorful hanging baskets and a multitude of various trees. Burnt out buildings have been demolished and on one location a beautiful garden now occupies that site. Businesses are repurposing old buildings for a new life. New LED lighting has been added to period light fixtures and businesses are beginning to open and flourish as visitors and residents now walk the much more attractive streets. There is a feel of success in the air and everyone is wearing a big smile as the city transforms itself. Stark concrete is being removed where it's not needed and new fresh soil and water sources are added. The areas are planted with beautiful plantings and much needed trees now line the city streets. Volunteers care for the plantings through the Ottawa in Bloom program. Congratulations to all for a job well done.

Ottawa is mitigating floodplains of the Illinois and Fox Rivers, repurposing them to passive and active park land. By razing Old West High School, businesses and housing, new greenspace will be preserved for many types of public recreation, improving both the riparian environment as well as the aesthetics of the community."

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Congratulations to Ottawa!

Registrations for the 2014 national awards program can be submitted until February 28, 2014. Eligible participants include towns, cities, college and university campuses, business districts, military installations, and recognized neighborhoods of large cities.

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*America in Bloom is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting nationwide beautification programs and personal and community involvement through the use of flowers, plants, trees, and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements.*

*America in Bloom provides educational programs, resources, and the challenge of a friendly competition between participating communities across the country.*

*For more information, visit [www.americainbloom.org](http://www.americainbloom.org).*

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