

Programs and Ideas that Work in Our Communities

From the America in Bloom Elected Officials and Administrators Roundtable

Thursday, September 25, 2025 in Rochester, Michigan

Washington, Missouri, Doug Hagedorn

Brick town is located on the Missouri River which includes 6 miles of riverfront trail (through a TIF) and also runs along the downtown front street. Many volunteers were used big time.

Tavares, Florida, John Drury

Vision without implementation is a hallucination

America in Bloom gave Tavares the tools to implement. We want to be America's Sea Plane City. Our sea plane base has a small airport terminal, the smallest airport terminal in the county.

Tavares, Florida, Lori Pfister-Vice Mayor

Couldn't do without her City Administrator, City Council, and Department Heads. They make everything possible. We were the first to start an AIB chapter which now includes 14 communities.

Warrenville, Illinois, Vivian Lund

We are still doing everything that AIB started us on. We have a new Mayor who believes in the program so maybe next year we will be back.

They've received 200 to 250 nominations for their curb appeal awards.

Cole Hoyer, Estelline South Dakota

Estelline has been in Silos and not able to look outside the vision plane. We have two great features:

Reflection park and the nursing home, both operating in Silos. The park has room for additions like water. We are working hard to bridge the communication gap.

Emily Lee, Eustis, Florida.

AIB has done wonders for our community. They now put America in Bloom in their budget.

The butterfly wings were brought and they initiated a photo contest.

Containers were purchased for all downtown stores; they are working on redeveloping the downtown stores and they will start an art colony. There are plans to do a mural. Eustis has a great volunteer staff and has great sunsets.

Russ Baron, Shawnee Hills Ohio, Administrator

Starts with "Welcome to."

Signs were updated in the parks and on Main Street.

We learned how to harness small public spaces through partnerships with businesses for things like

pollinators, public art, and education. We now have public art and a tree commission. We love AIB folks! We will start a public art commission, create a master tree plan, and plan our first mural by the tattoo shop. Our community has a tree canopy of 43 percent.

Brant Kucera, Ashland, Wisconsin

Our heritage is in railroad and iron ore, which is all gone now.

There are a lot of projects, and the community is in transition from their industrial background.

Lake Superior makes the community what it is and has become their identity. Water is the future of city. The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is close, and the area is remote so it's a struggle to develop. Ore docks are nearby, and the first 900 feet has been turned into a walkway and is ADA accessible. It runs a quarter mile into Lake Superior.

Rick Webb, Logan Ohio

In 2012 downtown was vacant and they took out sidewalks and replaced them with trees, shrubs, and flowers using volunteers and donors.

Today the city is coming back to life. Volunteers were beginning to come out. People were donating money. Within two years there were more people on the street. Investments and grants have increased.

Tyler Stone, Castle Rock, Washington

Leadership and support from the Mayor and city council allows them to do succession planning. Weekends are part of the program. It provides a vision for kids. Kids are a part of the program.

Chuck Engel, Topeka Kansas

Topeka Boulevard is an 11-mile stretch. They moved all retail 6 miles away and the downtown lost everything. The county and city merged Parks and Recreation into 2600 acres of parks and trails, 2 golf courses, and 2 lakes and it has worked well. They are now focusing on downtown, entryways, and corridors. Private funding helps.

Michelle Bailey-Hedgepeth, Williamsburg, Maryland

Adding more curb appeal and plants. They have great partners in grant writing and do it together with other communities.

Tracy Gant, Edmonston, Maryland

Unity Bridge was a gathering place, but it is now a beautiful main street where people come out to meet. They volunteer and they are proud of building sidewalks to make it walkable. The community bought land to make into a park.

Julie Wilkie, Greenwood, South Carolina

We have created a tree and vacant building ordinance. Hurricane Helene devastated our community. And they are now working on a tree survey. Want to have a graffiti wall.

Pam Newton, Hawthorn Woods, Illinois

Anti-suburb of Chicago. Urban forestry focus, second community in Illinois to be dark skies initiative, and they are now a visitor destination. Hawthorn Woods is the 1st Audubon International Society community, they have tough light and tree ordinances, no above ground pools, and no sheds. Turning off lights comes at no cost to anyone.

Cassie Blasck, Highland Township, Michigan

We added pollinator plants, a no-mow zone, and education on pollinators. You'll find 25 lakes in our community.

Dorothy Skowrunski, Coshocton, Ohio

We formed a 501(c)(3) to do AIB for the past 15 years, Our city government was not involved. We built two green houses and a community center from donated funds from the community, and we have a succession plan.

Chris Barnett, Orion Township, Michigan

We understand the importance of partnerships and think outside the box. This organization (AIB) has been amazing for us. You need to have friends of groups-not for profits. And public-private partnerships. They added natural resource specialist which has made a difference.

Karen Charbie, Chesterfield, Michigan

We are trying to preserve land partnering with the land conservancy group. We have six rivers and there's no downtown now but we are working to have one. We are planting prairie wildflowers in open fields.

Frank Viviano, Supervisor of Macomb Twp, Michigan

Macomb Township is working on their Greenway project to connect Freedom Trail and old Orchard Trail which will connect to Paint Creek. The community has tripled over the past three decades in population. A 6x6 square mile community purchased the former Lion's Park which sits on the north branch of the river. This is the first part of greenway project.

Dan O'Leary, Deputy Supervisor of Clinton Township, Michigan

Four river branches of the Clinton River plus a spillway to move water into the lake run through this community, the largest in the area. Parks here are associated with the river. They have a 24-acre Arboretum on 18 miles, and two baseball fields for special needs. They have a lot of trails, but they don't connect to other trails. They recently built an Inclusive playground and a splash pad.