

Evaluation Form

2024



2024 Evaluation Form



Community: Stirling-Rawdon

Province: Ontario

Category: up to 5,000

The evaluation is based on 8 criteria, divided into the 6 following sections, assessing 4 sectors of the community:

Tidiness	116.5	/	150.00
Environmental Action	103	/	150.00
Heritage Conservation	128	/	150.00
Urban Forestry	137.5	/	175.00
Landscape	154	/	200.00
Floral Displays	146	/	175.00
Total	785	/	1000.00

Percentage: 78.5

Bloom rating: 4 Blooms

Bloom rating: Up to 55%: 1 bloom. 56% to 63%: 2 blooms. 64% to 72%: 3 blooms. 73% to 81%: 4 blooms. >82%: 5 blooms.

Mention: Environmental Action & Heritage Conservation

Representative (s) of Community

Name:	<u>Caroline Smith</u>	Function :	<u>Member of Council, Horticultural Society , Councillor</u>
Name:	<u>Roxanne Hearn</u>	Function :	<u>Chief Admin Officer</u>
Name:	<u>Click here to enter text.</u>	Function :	<u>Click here to enter text.</u>

Judges

Name:	<u>Sandy Cairns</u>	Name:	<u>Justin Kole</u>
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Evaluation date: Tuesday July 16- Wednesday July 17 2024

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- * Evaluation is adjusted to the climate and environmental conditions of the community.
- * Some aspects of the evaluation might not be applicable: scoring will be prorated.
- * The score will vary from the previous year based on the facts that the evaluation form is subject to modifications each year and that the evaluation is based on the perception of the current judges.

SECTORS OF EVALUATION

Municipal:

- Municipal properties, parks and green spaces, streets, streetscapes
- Properties owned and run by municipality such as museums, historical sites

Business and Institutions:

Properties owned and managed by

- **Business:** commercial sector, shopping centres, commercial streets, industrial parks, manufacturing plants
- **Institutions:** schools, universities, churches, hospitals, service and community organization buildings (such as YMCA, Legion), private museums, government and crown corporations buildings (such as Canada Post)
- **Tourism bureaus and Chamber of Commerce offices**
- **Farms:** in rural communities, farms can be considered in this section

Residential:

- Citizens and citizen groups acting within their own properties
- Residential property owners, rate payer groups

Community Involvement:

The principle of community involvement is so fundamental to the program that it is considered in each segment of the evaluation.

- Individuals, community organizations and citizen groups – all contributing to various aspects of community improvement, including municipal spaces maintained through the efforts of volunteers and community
- Organized clubs such as horticultural societies, garden clubs, community associations
- Service clubs such as Rotary, Lions, and Optimist
- Participation (financial and/or in-kind or employee participation) by the municipality, businesses and institutions.

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GENERAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Both Justin and I would like to thank the Township of Stirling-Rawdon for the amazing hospitality from your beautiful community!



Our tour covered all areas of the criteria of Communities in Bloom and we were impressed by the support of the communities involvement! The support of His Worship Mayor Bob Mullin, your Council and Staff is commendable.

Thank you to our tour guides as we stopped along the way and the bus rides made it great to chat and learn along the way! Kudos to Pam and her family and team at Nine Hand Hill Farms with so much activity going on with the kids camp learning about planting, cooking and caring for farm animals. What a great addition to your family farm by adding another great meal option “ Farm to Fork” !



We have to say a big thank you to Councillor Caroline Smith and the hardworking dedicated Horticultural committee for all the support, hard work and dedication to help make Stirling-Rawdon a Blooming Community. Your use of the colour Orange was noticed the minute we arrived at the Covered Bridge and we were greeted by the resident Heron for a photo op!!! The before and after photos show how important it is to embrace the future while remembering your past!



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Stirling has so much rich culture and history that has been saved and preserved in so many ways. Your clean and tidy cemeteries tell such stories of the historical families that put Stirling on the map!



The Legion Cenotaph and Gardens are beautiful with wild poppies and well thought out floral displays through the square. Nice seating to just sit and reflect. The Legion building Mural certainly showed history. We shall remember them.

The streetscape that Downtown just finished up is impressive. It seems to already be attracting new businesses to locate in the heart of your community. Thank you for introducing us to new businesses and visiting their shops. Always nice to hear the great things that retailers in the community are doing. The new Bookstore is bright and cheerful, Vintage Junction with reuse recycle offerings, Rawdon Creek Soap, a quick stop in and treats from the Farm Girl and stop and talk to many others. The added touch in the downtown core and the number of planter boxes and garden areas are very clean and tidy.

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As with many small communities there is a struggle to fill our downtown shops and businesses. The activities that you are providing such as the Music and other events at the covered bridge are encouraging and exciting. Public spaces do improve community vitality and promote peoples health, happiness, and well-being. We would encourage the community to continue to improve the economic,

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physical and social aspects of the community's traditional town centre redevelopment to encourage new business to move to your exciting and growing community. All businesses are looking for communities that provide a variety of residential accommodation in terms of style, type and cost. Businesses want to know that their staff can find suitable, affordable, local accommodation to ensure that they can attract the people that they need. Similarly, business owners want to be able to find local residential accommodation that meets their personal needs and desires. The availability of appropriate local residential accommodation can have a significant impact on where a business locates. Thank you for the tour of the newer developments in Stirling. We certainly saw a wide range of neighborhoods that accommodate the growing population.



We noticed a couple of prime real estate parcels that were close to the downtown core that could be a perfect opportunity to add some mixed residential and higher density units. This allows newcomers a short walk to the town center and preserves prime agricultural land.

It's unfortunate that the province downloaded a major road to your community to upkeep, resulting in many large trucks driving right through the center of town. One way we think you might be able to take back the walkability and safety of pedestrians in the city center is to lower the speed limit on that main thoroughfare to a speed so low that when google (or similar system) calculates a route for trucks, due to the lower speed, it actually is faster for them to go around the city core. You can also look into strategic spots to place a few signaled (button activated) pedestrian crossings, to further make it apparent to motorists to slow down and watch out.

We noted the preservation and upgrade of the Stirling Theatre and had the opportunity for a full tour of the Theatre and enjoyed a quick view of the upcoming production! The Theatre is a great community hub with lots of great excitement happening. A great added event space was also noted.

We must say a big Wow and thank you to the Rotary Club for the amazing meeting and breakfast as well as their hard work, dedication and commitment to the next community project!!! And what a

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project it has been!!! Working with the Mayor and Council of the time to agree to let the Rotary Club adopt and take over the Historical Grand Trunk Railroad Station. Kudos to the Rotary Club for the vision of creating a home for the Rotary Club, event space, antique shop, and a Museum to share the history of the station and the Station Masters family home above the station. What a true vision and reality of the Rotary Club for seeing through and fund raising for the relocation, although not far from its new home.



The refurbishing of the Station and adding electricity to take the Historical Stirling Grand Trunk Railway Station for all to enjoy today and for the future of the Rotary Club, its residents and visitors. The gardens around the station, the recycling of bottles and cans setup is an incredible way to continue with a revenue stream to continue to help fund projects for the Rotary Club. The multi-use trail along the front of the Station with two areas one asphalt section for pedestrians and the other graveled section for horses, ATVs and other larger modes of travel.

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We had the distinct pleasure of a tour of Farmtown Park where we learned the history of Agriculture in Stirling. Very impressed with the collection of historical farm equipment and the way things were done in times past. Thank you Hugh Hoard for the History lessons on past cheese making productions, bee keeping and so many old farming equipment and artifacts. The preservation and the rich history is protected by the buildings and the history shared by families passed down from generations of farming in Stirling and area.

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As you have stated Stirling-Rawdon is a Community that offers an attractive lifestyle with rich cultural venues and charming atmosphere. Your Community embraces the future while remembering the past !!



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TIDINESS		
<p>Tidiness includes an overall tidiness effort by the municipality, businesses, institutions and the residents throughout the community. Elements for evaluation are parks and green spaces, medians, boulevards, sidewalks, streets; municipal, commercial, institutional and residential properties; ditches, road shoulders, vacant lots, signs and buildings; weed control, litter clean-up (including cigarette butts and gum), graffiti prevention/removal and vandalism deterrent programs.</p>		
	Max	Actual
Municipal		
Tidiness, order, cleanliness and first impressions	10	8
Community anti-litter awareness programs	10	7
Effective bylaws, programs and policies and enforcement; litter control, graffiti prevention and eradication, graffiti removal kits to residents	10	8
Cleanliness of public green infrastructure: parks, streetscapes (sidewalks, planters, urban signage and furniture such as benches, litter and recycling containers etc.)	15	13
Visual appeal, and condition of municipal buildings and properties (including City Hall grounds)	15	13
Business & Institutions		
Tidiness, order and cleanliness and first impressions	15	11
Condition of buildings (exterior maintenance), grounds, sidewalks and parking lots	15	8
Condition of urban furniture: benches, litter and recycling containers	5	2
Residential		
Tidiness, order and cleanliness	20	17.5
Condition of buildings, grounds and yards	15	13
Community Involvement		
Public participation in community, neighbourhood or individual street tidiness, clean-up programs, activities and annual maintenance (including promotion, organization, innovations involving youth and seniors, etc.)	10	8
Support – financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions for community clean-up programs	10	8
Tidiness Total	150.00	116.5

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TIDINESS

The main downtown area of your community presents an admirable example of cleanliness and order. During a recent observation, it was noted that the streets and most areas throughout the community were remarkably free of litter, garbage, and graffiti contributing to a tidy and welcoming atmosphere. This level of cleanliness not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the downtown area but also reflects the community's commitment to maintaining a high standard of public spaces.



Local businesses have also demonstrated exceptional pride in their surroundings. Many storefronts were not only clean but also inviting, with owners clearly taking extra measures to ensure their premises were well-maintained. This effort enhances the shopping experience for visitors and reinforces the image of a vibrant, community-oriented downtown.

Moreover, it was heartening to observe that the residential areas within the community were also well cared for. The majority of properties were in good condition, with residents taking the time to maintain their homes and gardens. This contributes to an overall sense of pride in the community and sets a positive example for others.

The active involvement of community institutions such as the Rotary Club, Women's Institution, and Horticultural Society is another highlight. These organizations are taking on multiple projects throughout the community, further enhancing the quality of life for residents and adding to the area's charm. Their contributions are invaluable in fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among community members.

In conclusion, the collective efforts of businesses, residents, and community organizations are clearly making a positive impact, creating a clean, inviting, and well-maintained environment that everyone can be proud of.



To further enhance the cleanliness and aesthetic appeal of your community, a few targeted actions are recommended. One key suggestion is the installation of additional garbage and recycling receptacles along the main streets, particularly near shops. This would provide more convenient disposal options

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for pedestrians, helping to maintain the tidy environment that is already evident in the downtown area.

While graffiti doesn't seem to be a big problem in Stirling-Rawdon, it is something that can and will happen, so a ready to implement kit for residences or businesses to grab from the city would be a good idea.

Another important step is to continue encouraging businesses in the downtown area to participate in cleanup programs throughout the year. Their ongoing involvement is crucial in sustaining the clean and inviting atmosphere that both residents and visitors appreciate. By promoting these initiatives, the community can ensure that everyone contributes to keeping the area well-maintained.

It has also been observed that some downtown buildings have bricks at ground level that are beginning to lose their integrity. This issue should be monitored closely to determine the cause, which could be related to excessive salt use or potential damage from snow plows. Addressing this problem promptly will help prevent further deterioration and maintain the structural integrity of these buildings.

Additionally, the town entrance signs that display the names of local clubs and organizations could benefit from an update or repair. These signs are an important aspect of the community's identity, and refurbishing them will help to better represent the pride and active engagement of local groups.



The community might consider repurposing trees that have been cut down due to disease or other issues to create natural wooden benches throughout the town. This approach would not only be environmentally friendly but also enhance the town's aesthetic by providing a more natural and cohesive look, in contrast to metal benches.

We would recommend, if you haven't already, to look into implementing a downtown facade improvement program. An example to look into during budget talks would be: Downtown Facade Improvement Program (City of Nanaimo, British Columbia) Overview: Nanaimo's Downtown Facade Improvement Program provides grants to property owners and businesses in the downtown area for exterior

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renovations. The goal is to improve the visual appeal of downtown and promote economic activity.

Funding: The city offers matching grants, typically covering up to 50% of the eligible project costs, with a maximum grant amount.

Success Story: This program has helped to rejuvenate Nanaimo's historic downtown, preserving its character while encouraging new business investment and increased tourism.

By implementing these recommendations, your community can continue to build on its strengths, ensuring that both residents and visitors enjoy a clean, welcoming, and well-maintained environment.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION		
<p>Environmental action pertains to the impact of human activities on the environment and the subsequent efforts and achievements of the community with respect to: policies, by-laws, programs and best practices for waste reduction and landfill diversion, composting sites, landfill sites, hazardous waste collections, water conservation, energy conservation, and environmental stewardship activities under the guiding principles of sustainable development pertaining to green spaces.</p>		
	Max	Actual
Municipal		
Sustainable development strategy: policies, programs, guidelines, long-term planning / vision; effective bylaws / policies and their enforcement; and public education programs and activities	20	17
Waste reduction to landfill and results (3-R : reduce, reuse and recycle), municipal composting programs, including activities such as composting sites, yard waste collections, mulching of wood debris (Christmas trees, hedge trimmings, etc.), reclamation of cut trees, and handling of hazardous waste including e-waste collection and reuse of compost material	20	17
Water conservation and use-reduction programs: efficient appliance incentives or promotions, efficient irrigation, use of non-potable water, water restriction policies and rainwater management	15	7.5
Energy conservation programs such as alternate forms of energy (ex. geothermal, biomass, wind, solar), and initiatives such as: efficient appliances initiatives, shielding for night skies issues, efficient street lighting	15	7.5
Environmental initiatives, innovations and actions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development and expansion of sustainable mobility and active transportation network such as bike lanes and multi-used pathways; ● Horticultural practices such as green roofs, green walls, green lanes, living fences, buffer zones; re-use of sites; engineered wetlands, bio-swales, permeable surfaces and rain water management ● Brownfield redevelopment, remediation, land reclamation ● Air quality programs such as anti-idling, reduction of greenhouse gas emission (carbon reduction). 	10	6
Business & Institutions		
Participation in the environmental effort: such as waste management (reduce, reuse and recycle), water conservation, energy conservation, brownfield management	10	5
Corporate environmental innovation / stewardship, initiatives, activities (ex. environmental clean-up activities)	10	8
Residential		
Participation in the 3-R (reduce, reuse and recycle) initiatives and composting	10	6
Adoption of water conservation practices & policies including rainwater collection	15	12
Community Involvement		
Public participation in public forums and policy development on environmental issues	5	1
Public participation in community, neighbourhood or individual street environmental activities and programs (including promotion, organization and evidence of taking ownership), etc.)	10	8
Support – financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions in public environmental activities and programs	10	8
Environmental Action Total	150.00	103

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ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

The community is demonstrating remarkable leadership and commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. The management and staff at the local arena are particularly noteworthy for their forward-thinking approach. Their ongoing efforts to transform the arena into a Net Zero building, along with their future plans, reflect an impressive dedication to reducing the facility's carbon footprint. This initiative sets a strong example for other community buildings to follow.

Another standout feature of the community is its wastewater treatment system, which is both unique and exceptionally well-managed. Under the careful supervision of Matt, the system operates efficiently, showcasing the community's commitment to maintaining high environmental standards.

The Horticultural Society also plays a significant role in enhancing the community's environment. Their active involvement in various environmental activities and widespread plantings throughout the area contribute to the community's natural beauty and ecological health. Their efforts are evident in the vibrant landscapes and green spaces that residents and visitors alike can enjoy.



Overall, these initiatives highlight the community's strong focus on sustainability and environmental responsibility, making it a model for others to aspire to.

To further enhance sustainability and environmental initiatives within the community, several key recommendations have been identified. One of the most impactful steps would be to establish a compost program at the landfill. Given the significant amount of manure produced by the rural

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community, this program could effectively recycle organic waste into valuable compost. Once established, the program could be expanded by hosting a compost giveaway day in the spring, which would be particularly beneficial for new developments in the area, helping them to start with healthy, nutrient-rich soil.

Another recommendation is to explore the implementation of a rain barrel program for residents. This



initiative would promote water conservation and could also serve as a successful fundraising opportunity for community projects. Additionally, the community should consider pursuing certification as a “Bee City.” With many existing efforts already aligning with the requirements, this designation would officially recognize the community’s commitment to protecting pollinators and enhancing biodiversity.

The community’s wastewater treatment facility, which operates as an engineered wetland, is an impressive and innovative feature. Although it is not a traditional tourist attraction, adding informative signage about its purpose and environmental benefits would help raise awareness and educate residents and visitors on the importance of sustainable water management practices.

Lastly, with the presence of large parking areas and open fields around the city core, the installation of solar panels as parking shade structures is worth considering. This approach could serve a dual purpose: providing shade for vehicles while generating renewable energy, further contributing to the community’s sustainability goals.

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By pursuing these recommendations, the community can continue to build on its already strong foundation of environmental stewardship and sustainability, creating a healthier and more resilient future for all residents.

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION		
<p>Heritage conservation includes efforts to preserve natural and cultural heritage within the community. Preservation of natural heritage pertains to policies, plans and actions concerning all elements of biodiversity including flora and fauna ecosystems and associated geological structures and formations. Cultural conservation refers to the heritage that helps define the community including the legacy of tangible (built/hard assets) elements such as heritage buildings, monuments, memorials, cemeteries, artifacts, museums and intangible elements such as traditions, customs, festivals and celebrations. The participation of groups such as historical societies and conservation groups are considered.</p>		
	Max	Actual
Municipal		
Natural heritage policies, by-laws and their enforcement and effective programs	10	4.5
Natural heritage management plans and preservation initiatives: including eco systems, eco parks, protection of sensitive habitats, species at risk, support for at risk pollinators, grasslands, naturalization, wetlands, urban agriculture/farming, and wildlife	15	13
Management and promotion of natural heritage (through communications, information and support programs, economic development / tourism) including activities and programs (year-round) for education and use of natural heritage sites for and by the public	15	13
Cultural heritage polices, by-laws and plans and preservation initiatives for heritage buildings, cemeteries, artefacts, museums, monuments, heritage trees and gardens, including their integration with streetscapes and landscape	15	13.5
Cultural heritage initiatives throughout the year including festivals and celebrations along with preservation of traditions and customs	10	9
Business & Institutions		
Conservation, restoration and integration of natural heritage, including eco parks, conservation areas, heritage gardens, trees and landscapes.	15	13.5
Promotion of local heritage, including heritage gardens, native plants, and heritage trees	10	8.5
Residential		
Conservation / restoration and reuse of heritage buildings, artefacts on residential lands.	10	8
Community Involvement		
Public participation in community, neighbourhood or individual natural heritage programs including developing policies and plans, site improvements and management, conservation and education initiatives.	15	13.5
Support – financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions (including environmental groups) in community initiated natural heritage activities and programs.	15	14
Public participation in community, neighbourhood or individual cultural heritage programs including year-round heritage community events/activities, festivals and celebrations along with preservation of traditions and customs	10	9
Support – financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions (including historical societies) in community initiated cultural heritage activities and programs.	10	8.5
Heritage Conservation Total	150.00	128

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION

The community's dedication to preserving its heritage and green spaces is truly commendable. The park and trails behind the school stand out as a wonderful feature for both students and the broader community. The foresight to maintain this green space highlights the value placed on outdoor areas for recreation and education. A special thanks to Caroline for ensuring that the sun came out before we left, allowing these beautiful areas to be appreciated in person.



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Equally impressive is the commitment to keeping the local theater vibrant and accessible. Ensuring that it remains a hub for community enjoyment while making it accessible to the aging population demonstrates a thoughtful approach to inclusivity and cultural preservation.



The Rotary Club's decision to select the old CN Train station as their home base, and moving the entire building several hundred meters closer to the road / trailhead is another shining example of heritage preservation. By maintaining the upper section of the station as a

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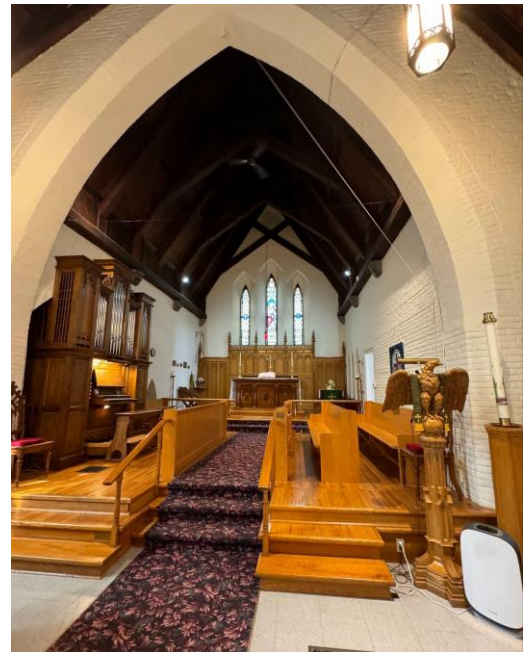
museum, they are not only preserving a significant historical site but also providing a space where the public can connect with the community's rich history.

The Agricultural Museum and fairgrounds are also vital in preserving and celebrating the community's agricultural roots. These spaces are in constant use, showcasing traditional agricultural machinery and practices, as well as a dedicated showcase for the Women's Institute, which plays a key role in preserving and promoting local traditions.

Finally, the tour of Saint John's Church was a highlight, thanks to the dedicated volunteers who have beautifully maintained the garden. Their efforts have ensured that the history of the oldest stone church in the area is preserved and celebrated. The care and attention given to this site reflect the community's deep respect for its heritage and the importance of protecting such landmarks for future generations.

These initiatives collectively demonstrate a strong commitment to preserving the community's heritage, ensuring that both historical and green spaces continue to enrich the lives of residents and visitors alike.

To further enhance the preservation and appreciation of Sterling's rich history, several key recommendations are proposed. One suggestion is to install small signs or plaques outside historically significant buildings in the downtown area. These plaques could provide a brief history of each building, perhaps even including an old photo to illustrate how the structure has changed or remained the same over time. This would offer residents and visitors alike a deeper connection to the town's past as they walk through the area. The other idea is to use a QR Code and have the photos and history about the history with most everyone now owning a smart device.



An updated theater marquee could be another opportunity for community involvement. Engaging the public through a fundraising campaign or encouraging donations could help expedite the replacement process, while also fostering a sense of collective ownership over this important cultural landmark.

It is also recommended to continue protecting and cherishing all historical features in Sterling by creating official policies and bylaws. Establishing such guidelines would ensure that future leadership teams are equipped to preserve these assets, allowing them to build upon the community's strong foundation of heritage preservation.

While maintaining the integrity of the downtown core's historic buildings, it's important to recognize the need for modernization. Allowing business owners to update and renovate the interiors and rear sections of their buildings while preserving the original front fascia would strike a balance between progress and preservation. This approach would retain the visual heritage that defines the downtown area, while still accommodating contemporary needs.

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Additionally, there may be potential to repurpose the upper and back sections of these buildings as apartments. This would not only preserve the historical character of the structures but also address housing needs within the community, contributing to a vibrant and sustainable downtown.

By implementing these recommendations, Sterling can continue to honor its past while thoughtfully planning for its future, ensuring that its rich heritage remains a cornerstone of the community.

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URBAN FORESTRY & TRAILS		
<p>Urban Forestry and Trails includes the efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions and residents with regards to written policies, by-laws, standards for tree and trail management (selection, design, signage, planting, and maintenance), long and short-term management plans, tree replacement policies, pollinator friendly tree selection, tree inventory, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM), heritage, memorial and commemorative trees. Trail types, signage, risk management policies, accessibility, surfacing and promotion</p>		
	Max	Actual
Municipal		
Overall impact, benefit and first impression of the urban forest and trail	10	8.5
Policies, regulations and tree by-laws, tree protection and planting on public and private lands	15	8
Urban forestry and trail plan and design, including integration with overall green infrastructure landscape plan, and measures to preserve, protect, manage and expand overall tree inventory, including woodlots and trails	20	16.5
Plan of action: procurement, species diversity (including native trees), selection of hardy and pollinator habitat tree species, recommended tree list and tree planting standards. Trail linkages , land acquisition, landowner agreements, stakeholder engagement	10	8
Integrated Pest Management (IPM) / Plant HealthCare (PHC): plan of action for invasive pest detection and control, information on current infestations and diseases . Trail vegetative encroachment control and risk management	10	8.5
Public information programs: good planting techniques, best practices and maintenance programs including Trail promotion, signage, guides, trail use protocols	15	9
Maintenance best practices with proven results	10	8.5
Qualified personnel (including seasonal staff) and/or in place training programs	5	4
Business & Institutions		
Contribution to expanding overall trail and tree inventory, with consideration of design and diversity including native and hardy species of trees, on properties owned by business and institutions.	15	13
Maintenance programs, best practices with proven results: watering, pruning, IPM, surfacing, signage, trailhead markers, hazard removals, inspections	10	7.5
Residential		
Contribution to expanding overall trail and tree inventory, with consideration of design and diversity including native and hardy species of trees on residential properties	15	12
Maintenance best practices with proven results	10	8
Community Involvement		
Public participation in tree planting and conservation programs such as Green Streets Canada, Arbor Day, Maple Leaf Day, and other tree planting and maintenance programs and activities on public lands (including promotion, organization etc.) Trail adoption, clean up days, maintenance and public safety awareness for users, eg snowmobilers, hikers, ATV, horses, etc	20	17.5
Support – financial and/or in-kind or participation or promotion by the municipality, businesses and institutions for community trail maintenance and stewardship, tree planting and conservation programs on public lands	10	8.5
Urban Forestry Total	175.00	137.5

Urban Forestry & Trails

The community’s efforts in environmental stewardship and public space utilization are commendable. The municipality’s current tree inventory stands out as an impressive initiative, reflecting a proactive approach to managing and preserving the urban forest. This inventory not only helps in maintaining the health and diversity of the local tree population but also demonstrates a commitment to long-term environmental planning.



One particularly striking feature is the Ginkgo tree located in the middle of downtown, with a bench thoughtfully placed underneath. This unique sight, nestled between buildings in what could have been an otherwise unused alley space, showcases creative urban design. The tree, which appears to be thriving in its setting, adds a touch of natural beauty to the downtown area, providing both a pop of green and a peaceful spot for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Additionally, it’s encouraging to see active representation from other municipal council members in the management of trails and parks. Their involvement highlights the community’s dedication to maintaining and enhancing these valuable public spaces, ensuring they continue to serve as vital resources for recreation and connection with nature. These initiatives collectively reflect a strong commitment to sustainability, thoughtful urban planning, and community well-being.

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To further improve the community's impressive trail systems, several key recommendations have been identified. While the existing trails, including the Trans-Canada Trail, are a great asset, they would benefit from more promotion and increased signage. Trans-Canada may still have trail markers available signage@tctrail.ca. Enhanced visibility would encourage greater use and appreciation of these outdoor spaces. Adding additional signs could also support the creation of walking and biking tours through the town center, providing residents and visitors with guided routes that highlight local points of interest.

Expanding the current municipal tree inventory through a voluntary tree registry for businesses and private landowners is another worthwhile initiative. This would allow the community to more comprehensively track and manage its tree population, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for the environment.

Trail signage could also be improved by including information about native species at the trailhead. This could be paired with educational photos identifying noxious weeds such as poison ivy, oak, sumac, and hogweed. Such signage would not only enhance the educational value of the trails but also help protect the public from potentially harmful plants.

Additionally, it is advised to reconsider the use of rubber mulch for walkways and playgrounds. While recycling old tires is a commendable idea, rubber mulch can pose long-term environmental challenges, such as particles breaking away and remaining in the soil without decomposing. Moreover, rubber surfaces tend to absorb heat quickly, making them uncomfortably hot.



Tested and proven alternatives to rubber mulch include options like wood chips, which are biodegradable and provide a natural, cooler surface. Engineered wood fiber is another excellent choice, particularly for playgrounds, as it offers cushioning, is ADA-compliant, and decomposes naturally over time. Pea gravel is also a durable, low-maintenance alternative for pathways, providing good drainage and a stable surface.

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These alternatives not only mitigate the environmental concerns associated with rubber mulch but also contribute to safer and more comfortable outdoor spaces. Meanwhile, old tires could still be repurposed in more appropriate ways, such as creating raised flower beds for non-edible plants on properties that border the town center, rural, or agricultural zones. This approach would continue to support recycling efforts while avoiding the drawbacks of using rubber mulch.

By adopting these recommendations, the community can further enhance its trail systems and green spaces, promoting sustainability, education, and environmental stewardship.

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LANDSCAPE		
<p>Landscape includes planning, design, construction and maintenance of parks and green spaces suitable for the intended use and location on a year-round basis. Elements for evaluation include: native and introduced materials; balance of plants, materials and constructed elements; appropriate integration of hard surfaces and art elements, use of turf and groundcovers. Landscape design should harmonize the interests of all sectors of the community. Standards of execution and maintenance should demonstrate best practices, including quality of naturalization, use of groundcovers and wildflowers along with turf management.</p>		
	Max	Actual
Municipal		
First impressions of the community including gateway / entrance treatments	10	7.5
Sustainable designs (seasonally adjusted year round): energy efficient, use of green materials, naturalization, xeriscaping, suitable plant varieties (including pollinator friendly) , traffic calming, bank stabilisation	10	7.5
Urban and civic design standards for streetscape and public places: flags, banners, public art, fountains, site furnishings, signage, seasonal design and décor, walkways and paving materials	10	8
Landscape Plan: integrated and implemented throughout the municipality	10	5
Turf management programs, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Plant Health Care (PHC), alternative solutions to diseases and infestations when appropriate, increased naturalization and adapted maintenance programs	10	5
Landscape maintenance policies, standards, best practices and programs	10	5
Landscape maintained to appropriate standards, specifications and best practices	5	3
Qualified personnel (including seasonal staff) and/or in place training programs	10	8
Demonstrated year-round opportunities and programs for education and use of parks and green spaces (urban agriculture, community gardens, parks and recreation programs)	10	8
Business & Institutions		
Sustainable designs (seasonally adjusted year round): energy efficient, use of green materials, naturalization, xeriscaping, alternate groundcovers, urban agriculture	10	7.5
Contribution to urban and civic design and public green spaces above requirements: such as public art, streetscape, site furniture, fountains & innovation in concept & design	15	12
Adequate ongoing life cycle management (ongoing maintenance, ground & asset management, rehabilitation & replacement) of all landscape elements	10	8.5
Residential		
Streetscape appeal of landscapes (year-round, seasonal, themed)	15	13
Maintenance of properties: lawn care and shrub maintenance (with proven results)	15	13
Selection of plant material (native, local, innovative, edible and pollinator friendly plants)	10	8
Community Involvement		
Public participation in community programs such as: urban agriculture, community gardens, "yard of the week", volunteer park maintenance, holiday illumination & decoration (promotion, organization, etc.)	20	18
Recognition (by municipality and/or by volunteer groups) of volunteer efforts in all aspects of the Communities in Bloom Program including activities in all evaluated criteria	20	17
Landscape Total	200.00	154

LANDSCAPE

The community’s approach to landscaping reflects a thoughtful balance between functionality and natural beauty. The use of local rocks and boulders throughout the community and in garden spaces is particularly commendable. These natural elements not only enhance the aesthetic appeal but also create a sense of place by incorporating materials that are native to the area.



In the downtown core, the design of garden boundaries using stones and bricks is especially noteworthy. These features are built at heights that serve a dual purpose, providing additional seating space for residents and visitors. This clever use of materials demonstrates a practical and innovative approach to urban design.

All gardens observed were well-maintained and organized, contributing to the overall visual harmony of the community. It’s also refreshing to see that the landscaping does not overly rely on hardscaping, a common trend in many areas. Instead, the community has preserved some natural areas and edges, maintaining a balance between developed spaces and the natural environment. This approach not only promotes biodiversity but also enhances the charm and livability of the community.

To further enhance the community’s already impressive landscaping efforts, several recommendations have been identified. One suggestion is to consider replacing the concrete round blockades, when it’s time for their renewal, with more natural boulders sourced locally. This would create a more cohesive and environmentally integrated look, aligning with the community’s existing use of natural materials.

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Another opportunity lies in utilizing the “Art in the Park” works of art on a more long-term basis by featuring them in various gardens or park spaces throughout the community. Rotating these art pieces occasionally would keep the displays fresh and engaging while adding cultural value to public spaces.

To foster community pride and engagement, consider organizing a friendly competition to spotlight residences with exceptional gardens, including vegetable gardens. This competition could encourage residents to showcase their green spaces, with awards or recognition for the best-maintained and most creative gardens. Despite the challenges posed by weather conditions, such a competition would inspire others to enhance their own gardens while celebrating the efforts and creativity of participating residents. This approach not only promotes community involvement but also adds an element of fun and friendly rivalry to the beautification of the neighborhood.

Implementing small, easily changeable signs to acknowledge the various groups or individuals who maintain the community’s gardens is another way to build community connection and appreciation. These signs would give well-deserved recognition and encourage continued participation in beautification efforts.

For entrance signs, adding lighting—potentially solar-powered—and low-growing perennials that won’t obstruct the signage could greatly improve visibility and aesthetic appeal, particularly during evening hours.



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Adopting the best practices and procedures from the Canadian Landscape Standard and integrating them into local policies would ensure high-quality, sustainable landscaping practices. Additionally, organizing information sessions for residents, possibly in collaboration with local landscape companies, could provide valuable insights into best practices, materials, and design ideas tailored to different budget levels. These sessions would empower residents to contribute to the community's overall landscape quality, fostering a shared commitment to maintaining and enhancing the area's beauty.

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FLORAL DISPLAYS		
<p>Floral displays evaluates efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions and residents to design, plan, execute, and maintain floral displays of high quality standards. Evaluation includes the design and arrangements of flowers and plants (annuals, perennials, bulbs, ornamental grasses, edible plants, water efficient and pollinator friendly plants) in the context of originality, distribution, location, diversity and balance, colour, and harmony This pertains to flowerbeds, carpet bedding, containers, baskets and window boxes.</p>		
	Max	Actual
Municipal		
Integration into overall landscape plan and distribution through community. Concept and design including sustainable design	15	13.5
Diversity of displays: flowerbeds, raised beds, planters, hanging baskets, window boxes, carpet bedding, mosaics	20	17
Diversity of plants: annuals, perennials, bulbs, grasses, woody plants, natural flora, pollinator friendly plants	10	7
Quality, maintenance to appropriate specifications and standards, best practices: watering, weeding, edging, dead heading, etc.	20	18
Qualified personnel (including seasonal staff) and/or training	10	8
Business & Institutions		
Concept and design (including arrangement, diversity, colour of display and plants) on grounds	15	13
Contribution to, and integration with, overall community floral program	10	7
Quality of planting and maintenance: watering, weeding, edging, dead heading, etc.	10	7
Residential		
Concept and design (including arrangement, diversity, colour of display and plants) on residential properties Pollinator gardens and/or inclusion of pollinator plants in gardens	20	17
Quality of planting and maintenance with proven results	15	13.5
Community Involvement		
Public participation in community projects, volunteer initiatives, outreach programs in floral displays (including promotion, organization, etc.)	15	13
Support – financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions for community floral displays activities	15	12
Floral Displays Total	175.00	146

FLORAL DISPLAYS

The community has effectively showcased orange as the color of the year, with this vibrant hue beautifully integrated into various floral displays. The use of orange in planters, window boxes, and gardens throughout the downtown area has created a cohesive and energetic visual impact.

The care and maintenance of gardens around park and public place signs are also notable. These areas are well-kept and enhance the visual appeal of public spaces, reflecting a strong commitment to community beautification.

A standout feature is the Legion’s cenotaph garden and monument located in the heart of downtown. This garden, situated next to an accessible public space, is a striking and meaningful addition to the area. The perennial poppies used in this space are a perfect fit, adding a touch of beauty and solemnity to the cenotaph, which is clearly a cherished and well-utilized spot.



Additionally, the Stirling-Rawdon Public Library contributes significantly to the community’s floral efforts. As a Carnegie Library with a rich heritage, it offers valuable resources on plants, including a seed library, seedling giveaways, and educational programs for children's gardens. This integration of heritage and horticulture supports and inspires the community’s gardening initiatives, fostering a deeper connection to local green spaces.

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To further improve the community's floral displays and reduce future maintenance, it is recommended to increase the use of perennials, especially around town entrance signs. Perennials are lower-maintenance and provide long-lasting beauty, which will contribute to a more sustainable and cost-effective landscaping approach.

Implementing a front yard garden contest could significantly boost community engagement and pride. A group of volunteers could be organized to judge the gardens in early July, with awards presented on stage at one of the community's many events. This contest would encourage residents, including youth, to showcase their gardening skills. Additionally, consider extending the competition to downtown businesses, with awards for the best business gardens, further enhancing the overall appeal of the area.

Looking into the Miracle-Gro Best Garden Selection Program could also be beneficial. This program, offered to communities involved in the Communities in Bloom (CIB) program, provides signs, Miracle-Gro gift packages, and congratulatory letters from Scotts Canada. Participating in this program could help highlight the community's "Best Garden Selection" and provide additional recognition for outstanding gardens.

Finally, incorporating a small stand of Karl Foerster (feather reed grass) into the community's gardens could create a dramatic visual accent. With its tall, slender growth and feathery plumes, this grass is ideal for adding year-round interest and can be especially impactful when used around Legion Cenotaphs, where it can be envisioned as symbolic soldiers standing guard. This addition would enhance the visual appeal and thematic significance of the community's public spaces.

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Thank you, Stirling-Rawdon, for showing us your vibrant community. We truly appreciated the opportunity to see your beautiful spaces and learn about your initiatives. We hope that our observations and suggestions will be useful as you continue to enhance and maintain your community's green areas. Your commitment to creating a welcoming and well-kept environment is truly commendable, and we look forward to seeing how your efforts continue to flourish.

Thank you for participating in Communities in Bloom, and we look forward to seeing how you have bloomed next year!



2024 Evaluation Form



THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT

“Within the context of climate change and environmental concerns, communities involved in the Communities in Bloom program can be proud of their efforts, which provide real and meaningful environmental solutions and benefit all of society.”

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM IS MADE POSSIBLE BY

The commitment of local, provincial and national volunteers.

The support of elected officials and of staff in municipalities.

The dedication of our judges, staff and organizations.

The contributions of our sponsors and partners.