

Evaluation Form

2024



ELK POINT

Growing Great Places Together
Cultivons ensemble de beaux espaces

2024 Evaluation Form



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Community: Elk Point, Alberta

Category: Friends (Population 501 – 2000)

CiB recognizes efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change which is reflected in several criteria including: Environmental Action; Preservation of Natural Heritage; Tree Management and Landscape

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------|----------------|
| Community Appearance | 113.00 | / | 150.00 |
| Environmental Action | 112.00 | / | 150.00 |
| Heritage Conservation | 105.00 | / | 150.00 |
| Tree Management | 121.00 | / | 175.00 |
| Landscape | 141.00 | / | 200.00 |
| Plant and Floral Displays | 131.50 | / | 175.00 |
| Total | 723.50 | / | 1000.00 |

Percentage: 72.35%

Bloom rating: 3 Blooms

Bloom rating: Provincial, National and International Participants

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

Bloom Levels: National Edition and International Challenge, for evaluated communities only.

82 to 83.9%: 5 Blooms. 84 to 86.9%: 5 Blooms (Bronze). 87 to 89.9%: 5 Blooms (Silver). 90% and over: 5 Blooms Gold

Mention: Community Garden

Representative (s) of Community

Name: Terri Hampson Function: Elk Point EDC

Name: Tim Smereka Function: Elk Point Councilor

Name: Jay Duffee Function: Elk Point Public Works

Judges

Name: Berta Briggs Name: Cathy Kremer

Evaluation date: August 9, 2024

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IMPORTANT NOTES:

Evaluation is adjusted to the climate and environmental conditions of the community.

Evaluation is also adjusted to match the capacity of a community population to the achievements in all criteria – i.e. evaluate what they do (achieve) with what they have (population/ resources).

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 scores are 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, Business Improvement Areas (BIA), 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, provincial and federal parks, etc.)
- **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 including condos and co-ops

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, citizen groups (includes youth programs) – 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, school groups
- Service clubs such as Rotary, Lions, Optimist
- Participation (financial and/or in-kind or employee participation) by the municipality, businesses, and institutions.

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GENERAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Welcome to Alberta Communities in Bloom 2024! Elk Point is a beautiful town in and we enjoyed learning why residents feel it is “The Right Place to Be”! Congratulations on receiving 3 Blooms! This is the same bloom number you received last year but you earned many more points. Good Job!

We commend you for developing the CiB program under economic development. The six criteria of Communities in Bloom are all pillars that have to be tended to in order to grow a vibrant and strong community. And it is so important to have full support from the municipal Council and staff. We learned a lot from our meetings with the Mayor, Councilors and Public Works staff and volunteers and we appreciated the respect and friendliness between all parties.

Elk Point is in the midst of rural renewal. This, of course, requires a regional approach. It is encouraging to see the growing relationship between the Town and the Frog Lake First Nation. The Allied Art and Leisure Centre hosts many First Nations meetings and events. There is an acknowledgement of the history and contributions of First Nations in the community. Explore the potential for future business partnerships – Elk Point has ample real estate and empty buildings that could benefit both Frog Lake and Elk Point.

The tour was well planned to allow us to see and learn about all criteria under evaluation. We enjoyed meeting many volunteers along the way who explained their role in building a great community. The pride, energy and creativity of volunteers is inspiring. You did an excellent job on the Profile to allow us to learn so much about Elk Point in advance of our visit – a good Profile document allow us to feel we know the community and we can hit the ground running. Thank you! A lot of work went into the preparation of the Profile, we encourage you to use it widely for residents to take a closer look at their community and for visitors or prospective new-comers to learn so much about the town. We suggest you put the Profile document on the Town website and that a hard copy be given to local realtors, any businesses or institutions that want to attract personnel, and anywhere visitors drop in. Also, since people like to see themselves, place a copy where people have to sit and wait such as tire shops or medical offices.

The outstanding spirit of the town is showcased in a very strong sense of passion for the community. The residents care for one another and a call to action is quickly embraced with an enthusiastic response. Kudos to your community strength! Continue to engage residents in community projects, especially the youth in initiatives that interest them.

Thank you for the warm hospitality. We hope to see a lot more of you in the future as you grow and flourish within the Communities in Bloom program as we “Grow Great Communities Together”!

Berta Briggs and Cathy Kremer
Alberta Communities in Bloom.

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ELK POINT SPECIAL MENTION

Mention: Community Garden

Elk Point is a town of 1200 residents in the Northeast part of Alberta and is living up to their motto of “The right place to be”. A perfect example of this is a very attractive and productive community garden. Volunteers hatched the idea in 2022 and just 2 years in stands a centrally located garden with 9 garden boxes that are fully subscribed. Two of the beds are for the nearby daycare and outreach school; with a seniors’ complex close by this is an ideal site for engage multiple generations of community members. Adjacent to the historic 100 foot mural along with benches and a memorial shade tree, this is a natural gathering place. There are plans to enhance the space with a granary style gazebo, compost bins and more garden beds. This is a wonderful community initiative!



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| COMMUNITY APPEARANCE | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| <p>Community appearance reflects an overall effort by the municipality, businesses, institutions and the residents throughout the community to create great first impressions and a sense that there is continuous attention and upkeep to critical elements of a community that benefit quality of life and economic vitality 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 | | |
| Gateway Impressions First impressions of the community including gateway/entrance landscape treatments | 10 | 7.5 |
| Overall Impressions Order, cleanliness, curb appeal and first impressions | 10 | 7.5 |
| Anti-litter/Graffiti Prevention and Removal Community anti-litter/graffiti awareness programs | 10 | 7 |
| Regulations Effective bylaws, programs and policies and enforcement; litter control, private property maintenance by-laws, vandalism, graffiti prevention and eradication, graffiti removal kits to residents | 10 | 7 |
| Asset Appearance Includes public green infrastructure: parks, streetscapes (sidewalks, planters, urban signage and furniture such as benches, litter and recycling containers etc.) | 10 | 7 |
| Municipal Properties Appearance Visual appeal and condition of municipal buildings and municipal owned properties | 10 | 7.5 |
| Business & Institutions | | |
| Overall Impressions Curb appeal, order, and cleanliness | 15 | 11 |
| Site Conditions Condition of buildings (exterior maintenance), grounds, sidewalks and parking lots | 15 | 11 |
| Furniture/Amenities Appearance Condition of urban furniture: benches, litter and recycling containers | 5 | 3.5 |
| Residential | | |
| Overall Impressions Curb Appeal, order and cleanliness | 20 | 16 |
| Property Conditions Condition of buildings, grounds and yards | 15 | 12 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Public Participation In community, neighbourhood or individual streets, clean-up programs, activities and annual maintenance (including promotion, organization, innovations involving youth and seniors, etc.) | 10 | 8 |
| Community Support Financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses service groups, and institutions for community clean-up programs. | 10 | 8 |
| Community Appearance Total | 150.00 | 113.00 |

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COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

Observations:

The entrances to Elk Point have large, beautiful welcome signs that tell the visitor that they have, indeed, arrived. The outstanding Peter Fidler carving at the north entrance invites one to stop and learn more about Fidler and the community. The old “Elk Point” signs near the newer welcome signs is a nice reminder of the growth of the Town.

The Public Works team, with limited staff, manage the extensive infrastructure and service areas within the Town. Their attention to a high standard of execution is evident. The streets, parks and outdoor sport facilities are kept in excellent condition.

Several prominent buildings throughout the community including the curling rink, the ice rink, the Extended Care facilities, the Allied Arts Building, and the privately owned grain elevator reflect the character and the pride of the community and are in very good condition.

It was very evident the residents of Elk Point are well aware of curb appeal and are proud to showcase their piece of Town. The trailer park community is attractive, clean and tidy.

Although the industrial park is underutilized and has many vacant buildings it is generally tidy and litter-free. It looks as though it is ready to turn the corner to prosperity. The Allied Arts complex, located in the industrial park, is beautiful and in excellent condition to welcome all to the great variety of programming that they present. It sets a high standard of appearance for the area. The Public Works building is in the same general area and also sets a good first impression of the community.

Clean up Day every May encourages residents to ensure their property and community continues to maintain high cleanliness standards.



Recommendations:

Encourage business beautification -The Chamber of Commerce has a representative on the Communities in Bloom committee. Perhaps an initiative from the Chamber to encourage more businesses to beautify their business frontages using existing examples in the community as a benchmark could gain momentum and attract future investment.

Beautify Main Street - Main Street has a few buildings with unique facades and architecture that add character to the community; many of these would benefit from a substantial facelift. Continue to work with the property owners to take responsibility to refurbish their building or develop a policy to enable the Town to beautify the storefronts until a business is operating within. Perhaps the property owner would allow a club or not for profit group to install a display behind a clean window to share information about their work.

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Improve way finding signage – For example, there is a hidden gem in the river valley – the town has spent money at the River Park Campground but there is little signage from the highway to notify travelers. Within Town there could be more signage to guide visitors to significant sites such as arena, Allied Arts Centre, schools and playgrounds.

Assess public infrastructure - There are several benches throughout town to enjoy the surroundings with an elk head image on them. These benches are in great condition. However, not all the benches have the elk image and some benches are in poor condition. An inventory of public infrastructure amenities and an action plan of refurbishment could be a project for the Town to consider.

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| ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Environmental action pertains to the impact of human activities on the environment and the subsequent efforts and achievements of the community with respect to environmental stewardship, 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 activities under the guiding principles of sustainable development pertaining to green spaces. | | |
| | Max | Actual |
| Municipal | | |
| Sustainable Development Strategies Policies, programs, guidelines, long-term planning/vision; effective bylaws/policies and their enforcement; and public education programs and activities. This includes activities such as: the creation of Active Transportation networks, fleet management, and recognition of the importance of biodiversity to mitigate and adapt to climate change. | 20 | 14 |
| Waste Reduction Reduction of waste going to landfill and results (3-R: reduce, reuse and recycle), municipal composting programs, including activities such as composting sites, yard waste collections, plastics reduction programs, mulching of wood debris (Christmas trees, hedge trimmings, etc.) and reclamation of cut trees. Handling of hazardous waste including e-waste collection and reuse of compost material. Officially mandating the greening of public events such as on-site recycling bins, biodegradable drink containers, food service dishes, utensils, etc. to minimize the use of plastic. | 20 | 15 |
| Water Conservation Use reduction programs such as promotions, efficient irrigation, use of non-potable water, water restriction policies | 15 | 11.5 |
| Energy Conservation Programs such as alternate forms of energy (ex. geothermal, biomass, wind, solar) and initiatives such as: energy-efficient appliances, shielding for night skies, efficient street lighting | 15 | 11.5 |
| Environmental Initiatives, Innovations and Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development and expansion of sustainable mobility and active transportation networks such as bike lanes, multi-use commuter pathways, and recreational trails - Horticultural practices such as planned biodiversity, green roofs, green walls, green lanes, living fences, buffer zones; re-use of sites; engineered wetlands, bioswales, permeable surfaces and rainwater management - Brownfield redevelopment, remediation, land reclamation - Air quality programs such as alternate energy sources, sustainable design of facilities, sustainable fleet management, reduction of greenhouse gas emission (carbon reduction), anti-idling by-laws. | 10 | 7.5 |
| Business & Institutions | | |
| Participation in The Environmental Effort Waste management (reduce, reuse and recycle), water conservation, energy conservation and audits (fleet management, electric conservation), brownfield management | 10 | 7 |
| Corporate Environmental Initiatives and Action Innovation/stewardship, initiatives, activities (for example: environmental clean-up activities, plastic reduction) carbon emissions, green roofs | 10 | 7 |
| Residential | | |
| Participation in Environmental Initiatives 3-R (reduce, reuse and recycle), composting | 10 | 7.5 |
| Water & Energy Conservation Practices such as water use reduction, rainwater collection and rain gardens, alternate forms of energy, thermostat reduction | 15 | 11 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Public Participation – Civil Action Participation in public forums and policy development on environmental issues, such as climate change adaptation and mitigation | 5 | 4 |
| Public Participation in Activities Community (including children/youth), neighbourhood or individual street environmental activities and programs (including promotion, organization, and evidence of taking ownership, etc.) | 10 | 8 |
| Community 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 | 112.00 |

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ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

Observations:

The municipality is actively adopting environmentally responsible practices. No pesticides are used. There is a composting facility with certified operators to create a quality product for all Town planters, baskets and garden beds, plus the compost is available to residents at no cost.

The Transfer Station is award winning for its management and for the volume of material diverted from the landfill. With a residential blue box program starting next year, this will further reduce the volume of waste going to the landfill.

Rainwater is collected off the library roof into a tote for use at the nearby community garden. This free source of water saves the community money and aligns with the organic planting practices at the garden.

The Town is using solar powered lighting along some trails and at the Eco Centre and is ensuring they are updated and in good condition.

There are a number of brownfield sites that are recognized and utilized in approved ways such as green spaces. Or in some cases the municipality is overseeing the remediation on private properties.

Recommendations:

Create a climate change action plan - The Town along with the County and neighbouring municipalities, are encouraged to create a climate change action plan to proactively reduce risks arising from climate change, as well as to be prepared for any emergencies such as floods, fires and hailstorms resulting from the changing climate.

Increase the number of residential rain barrels - There are many residential properties with rain barrels and composters. Continue to encourage the use of rain barrels, composters and tabletop waste digesters. Perhaps the municipality could subsidize the cost of units, or one of your clubs or youth organizations buy some in bulk and sell as a fundraiser.

Harvest rainwater from municipal buildings - Increase the use of water harvesting for municipal use. The library is an excellent start. Perhaps the rain from the public works building could be collected to fill the water truck to irrigate the many baskets and planters.

Convert waterways to bio-swales - Seize opportunities to use bio-swales rather than sewer pipes or grass ditches for storm water. The ditch beside the community garden is developing into a bio-swale – there is a good variety of native plants, grasses and wildflowers to effectively filter and purify the water. However, there is some creeping bellflower in that swale that should be eradicated before it invades residential yards – it is recognized that this is a very difficult plant to destroy or control.

Protect the watershed - Work with the local Watershed Alliance and Ducks Unlimited in their efforts to protect wetlands and watershed, even if it is just providing opportunities for them to inform and educate the local population.

Protect the community's residents - Consider a by-law to ban the use of chemical pesticides on residential properties. Also, a by-law against idling vehicles in front of schools and daycares would help protect those little lungs.

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| HERITAGE CONSERVATION | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| <p>Heritage conservation includes efforts to preserve and protect both 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 represents the “persona” of a community and 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, traditional cultural groups, and conservation groups is considered.</p> | | |
| | Max | Actual |
| Municipal | | |
| Natural Heritage Plans Management and preservation policies, plans, programs and initiatives: including eco systems, eco parks, trail networks, grasslands, naturalization, wetlands, urban agriculture/farming, wildlife and wildlife corridors, protection of sensitive habitats, species at risk and support for at risk pollinators. | 20 | 13 |
| Natural Heritage Promotion Management and promotion of natural heritage (through communications, information and support programs, economic development/tourism) including year-around activities and programs for education and use of natural heritage sites (including trail networks) for and by the public. | 15 | 10 |
| Cultural Heritage Plans Policies, by-laws, plans, and preservation initiatives for heritage buildings, cemeteries, artifacts, museums, monuments, heritage trees and gardens, including their integration with streetscapes and landscape | 15 | 11 |
| Cultural Heritage Activities Initiatives throughout the year including festivals and celebrations along with preservation of traditions and customs | 15 | 12 |
| Business & Institutions | | |
| Natural Heritage Assets Conservation, restoration and integration of natural heritage, including eco parks, conservation areas, trails, heritage gardens, trees and landscapes. | 10 | 6 |
| Cultural Heritage Assets Conservation, restoration and reuse of heritage buildings and artifacts including their integration with the built/hard, streetscapes and green landscapes | 10 | 7.5 |
| Residential | | |
| Cultural Heritage Initiatives Conservation/restoration and reuse of heritage buildings and artifacts on residential lands | 10 | 7.5 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Natural Heritage Public Participation Participation in community (including children/youth), neighbourhood or individual natural heritage programs and initiatives including developing policies and plans, site improvements (including trails, eco parks, reforestation and management, maintenance, conservation and education initiatives | 20 | 12 |
| Natural Heritage – Community 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 | 10 | 6 |
| Cultural Heritage - Public Participation Participation in community (including children/youth), neighbourhood or individual cultural heritage programs including year-round heritage community events/activities, festivals, and celebrations along with preservation of traditions and customs | 15 | 12 |
| Cultural Heritage - Community 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 |
| Heritage Conservation Total | 150.00 | 105.00 |

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Observations:

Elk Point has a very rich and varied natural heritage. The Iron Horse Trail allows users to observe the native forest with its magnificent trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers along with glimpses of the amazing birds and animals.

The west boundary of the popular multi-use trail, "The Loop" has been left undisturbed with the native trees, shrubs and vegetation providing a glimpse of the natural heritage. It is encouraging to learn that there is participation in the annual bird count.

For 50 years the Elk Point Historical Society has done and continues to do a wonderful job of documenting the post-settlement cultural history of the region. They have taken on many projects to preserve historical sites and events, to create special interest groups and to promote the rich history of Elk Point. The Historical Society is an active contributor to the digital archives with cloud storage hosted by St. Paul. This is a great way to preserve valuable archival material without climate controlled physical facilities.

The Peter Fidler carved statue in the prominent and well landscaped site is an inspiration to learn more about his amazing life and accomplishments that he so carefully documented. Geo-caching and Pokémon enthusiasts are encouraged to explore the Peter Fidler story and the Iron Horse Trail. This is a great, modern way to introduce people to the history and features of the area.

The historical murals are a wonderful depiction of the history and people of Elk Point, including the first Indigenous people and the acknowledgement of Treaty 6. They are a unique and important feature of the town.

Recommendations:

Identify and promote the local natural heritage - The North Saskatchewan River and the boreal forest, is home to hundreds of animal and bird species, as well as a wealth of plants and insects. It is easy to take these for granted. Consider identifying some natural heritage features that are protected and promoted. This is an important part of the CiB criteria as well as very valuable for both residents and visitors to learn about and to experience.

Protect the Murals - The Historical Murals are rapidly deteriorating. Contact the Royal Alberta Museum to see if their experts in restoration can offer any suggestions for how to preserve the murals plus suggestions for funding. Or apply for a Heritage Preservation Grant from the Alberta Government.

Promote Indigenous culture -The history of the First Nations people is integral in the founding, growth and development of Elk Point. Use every opportunity to expand your relationships with the neighboring Indigenous communities to learn more about their contributions to Elk Point's history. Good examples are the use of the Iron Horse Trail as part of the pilgrimages for Treaty Day or offering the Allied Arts Centre for large events hosted by Frog Lake First Nation.

Preserve and educate - There are some historical storyboards on the platform at the River Campground. These are very informative but are deteriorating and need to be replaced. In addition to the history depicted, this is a great site to install interpretive boards, related to the flora and fauna that viewers can expect to see nearby. Well placed interpretive boards along trails and by significant sites are effective to inform and educate the public. Including the information in Cree would also be a significant acknowledgement of reconciliation with the First Peoples of the area.

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| TREE MANAGEMENT | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Woodlands, Canopy Management, Urban and Rural Forestry includes the efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions, and residents with regards to written policies, by-laws, standards for tree management protection (selection, planting, and maintenance), long and short-term management plans, tree replacement policies, pollinator-friendly tree selection, tree inventory including heritage, memorial, and commemorative trees, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs. | | |
| | Max | Actual |
| Municipal | | |
| Overall Impression Overall impact, benefit and first impression of the urban forest | 10 | 7.5 |
| Strategic Plans Policies, regulations and tree by-laws, tree protection and planting on public and private lands | 15 | 11 |
| Urban Forestry Plan Plan, design and inventory management including integration with overall green infrastructure landscape plan, and measures to preserve, protect, manage and expand overall tree inventory, including woodlots and managed forests | 20 | 14.5 |
| Plan of Action Procurement, species diversity (including native trees), selection of hardy and pollinator habitat tree species, recommended tree list and tree planting standards. | 10 | 7.5 |
| Integrated Pest Management (IPM) / Plant HealthCare (PHC): plan of action for invasive pest detection and control, information on current infestations and diseases | 10 | 7 |
| Public Information Programs Provides information on good planting techniques, best practices and maintenance programs | 15 | 7.5 |
| Maintenance Quality Best practices with demonstrated results | 10 | 6 |
| Qualified Resources Qualified personnel (including seasonal staff and/or qualified experienced contractors) and/or in place training programs | 5 | 3 |
| Business & Institutions | | |
| Tree inventory Contribution to expanding overall tree inventory and canopy, management of hedgerows and forests, with consideration of design and diversity including native and hardy species of trees, on properties owned by businesses and institutions. | 15 | 10.5 |
| Maintenance Quality Programs, best practices with demonstrated results: watering, pruning, IPM | 10 | 7 |
| Residential | | |
| Tree Planting Contribution to expanding overall tree inventory, with consideration of design and diversity including native and hardy species of trees on residential properties | 15 | 11.5 |
| Maintenance Quality Best practices with demonstrated results | 10 | 7 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Public Participation Participation (including children/youth) 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.) | 20 | 14 |
| Community Support Financial and/or in-kind or participation or promotion by the municipality, businesses and institutions for community tree planting and conservation programs on public lands | 10 | 7 |
| Tree Management Total | 175.00 | 121.00 |

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TREE MANAGEMENT

Observations:

The tree canopy in Elk Point is quite impressive and approximately 80% appear to be in good health. Many coniferous trees are very tall and majestic. There are a good variety of different species of deciduous trees at various stages of maturity.

The Town has a Tree Plan that commits to planting at least ten trees per year. Public Works is aiming to make many of these fruit trees. Apple trees were planted by the spray park last year and combo apple and plum trees were selected this year. This beautifies the Town as well as providing a good food security model for the community.

Many trees are planted along the trails providing pleasant shade, serving as a windbreak, sequestering carbon and helping to reduce the heat island effect.

Residents value trees and shrubs in their landscape and are doing a good job of properly maintaining them.

There is a very beautiful pine tree by the community garden that is a memorial tree. It is unmarked at the request of the donor to stand as a 'pause of thought' for anyone who has lost someone dear. Lovely!

Recommendations:

Continue developing a Tree Plan - Continue developing a Tree Plan - Part of the Tree Plan should be a proper inventory to document species, tree health, size and location, etc. Two excellent resources to achieve this is <https://treecanada.ca> and www.itreetools.org – both have simple templates for small municipalities to start a tree inventory. Another, benefit of a proper tree inventory is that each tree has an asset value that is valuable if a developer wants to remove a tree – they must pay the assessed value of that tree which can be several thousand dollars for a mature tree. Also useful for insurance purposes if, for example, a vehicle knocks over a tree.

Have formula for tree replacement - As trees die or are removed on public land, have a policy of replacing each tree with 3 trees bearing in mind the importance of selecting a variety of species to reduce the risk of disease spread or insect infestation.

Provide information - On the municipal website have a listing of recommended trees and shrubs for your area; emphasis should be on native species. On the same site they offer information on planting and care of trees.

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Planting trees at parks and cemeteries - Currently there are no trees at Peter Stafford Park. The addition of some deciduous trees for shade would be a nice addition to this community playground. Also, cemeteries are cooler and quieter with some shade trees.

Invest in arborist training - Training from a tree professional could benefit both the Public Works staff and residents. To avoid costly issues with trees, investment in this training could significantly improve tree management practices. An unfortunate example of improperly planted trees are the apple trees beside the spray park planted in 2023. They are slowly dying due to being planted too deep – the root flare should be at the soil level. Trees planted too deep start to rot and die. Also important is to try to keep the root zone free of grass and weeds for the first couple years. Mulch to the depth of at least 4 inches around the trunk conserves moisture and inhibits weed growth. When using mulch think ‘donuts, not volcanoes’; that means to not place mulch against the trunk of the tree as that is the same as planting too deep. These 3 apple trees may survive if they are replanted correctly before winter.

Diversify plantings – Continue with the plan to plant trees every year but be aware when the same species of tree is planted in an area, it may be esthetically pleasing, but if a disease or insect problem arises, it can destroy the entire species quickly. With the prevailing black knot issue it is advisable to put a moratorium on planting any prunus (chokecherry, mayday, etc.). Best practice is to diversify the species planted.

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| LANDSCAPE | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| <p>Landscape includes planning, design, construction and maintenance of parks, green spaces and cemeteries suitable for the intended use and location on a year-round basis. Elements for evaluation include native and introduced materials; biodiversity, 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 and provide safe and secure public spaces. 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 | | |
| <u>Sustainable Designs – Soft Landscape</u> Sustainable designs: energy efficient, use of green materials, naturalization, xeriscaping, suitable plant varieties (including pollinator friendly) , traffic calming, bank stabilization | 15 | 11.5 |
| <u>Sustainable Designs - Hard Landscape</u> Urban and civic design standards for streetscape and public places including considerations for public safety: flags, banners, public art, fountains, site furnishings, signage including wayfaring and directional, seasonal design and décor, walkways and paving materials including use of artificial turf and its protocols | 15 | 10 |
| <u>Landscape Plan</u> Integrated and implemented throughout the municipality | 10 | 7.5 |
| <u>Landscape Management Programs</u> Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Plant Health Care (PHC), alternative solutions to diseases and infestations when appropriate, Invasive Species Management, increased naturalization, and adapted maintenance programs | 10 | 7.5 |
| <u>Landscape Maintenance</u> Policies, Standards, Best Practices and Programs including irrigation water management | 10 | 7.5 |
| <u>Landscape Quality</u> Landscape maintained to appropriate standards, specs and best practices, as an example as shown in the Canadian Landscape Standards | 5 | 3.5 |
| <u>Qualified Resources</u> Qualified personnel (including seasonal staff) and/or in place training programs and/or qualified experienced contractors | 10 | 6.5 |
| <u>Year-round use</u> Demonstrated year-round opportunities and programs for education and people being active and using parks and green spaces (urban agriculture, community gardens, parks and recreation programs and accessible public washrooms) | 10 | 6.5 |
| Business & Institutions | | |
| <u>Sustainable Designs</u> Energy efficient, use of green materials, naturalization, xeriscaping, alternate groundcovers, urban agriculture | 10 | 6.5 |
| <u>Integrated Plan</u> Contribution to urban & civic design and public green spaces above requirements: such as public art, streetscape, site furniture, fountains & innovation in concept & design | 15 | 9 |
| <u>Maintenance Quality</u> Adequate ongoing life cycle management (ongoing maintenance, ground & asset management, rehabilitation & replacement) of all landscape elements | 10 | 6 |
| Residential | | |
| <u>Streetscape Appeal</u> Residential yards (year-round, seasonal, themed) | 15 | 12 |
| <u>Maintenance Quality</u> Lawn care, trees and shrub maintenance (with demonstrated results) | 15 | 12 |
| <u>Plant Selection</u> Selection of plant material (native, local, innovative, edible & pollinator friendly plants) | 10 | 7 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| <u>Public Participation</u> in community programs (including children/youth) such as: urban agriculture, community gardens, "yard of the week", volunteer park maintenance, holiday illumination and decoration (promotion, organization, etc.) | 20 | 14 |
| <u>Volunteer Succession Plan and Recognition</u> Succession Plan and Recognition (by municipality and/or volunteer groups) of volunteer efforts in all aspects of the Communities in Bloom program including activities in all evaluated criteria | 20 | 14 |
| Landscape Total | 200.00 | 141.00 |

2024 Evaluation Form

LANDSCAPE

Observations:

Elk Point features a large town center area, several parks, playgrounds and greenspaces, trails, three cemeteries, and recreation areas as well as a very extensive industrial park. The 3 km trail known as “The Loop”, is well used and has connectors to most parts of town. The section of trail with solar lighting and spectacular floral features is very inviting.

North Park has ball diamonds and facilities suitable for Elk Point’s very popular Canada Day celebrations. This area is well used for winter/Christmas celebrations and events.

Peter Stafford Playground was installed in a weekend by community volunteers, to create a beautiful and play-friendly space.

The Elk Point Public Works department is responsible for the installation, beautification and maintenance of the entire green infrastructure. They are doing an excellent job.



Recommendations:

Develop a trail map - A map along with wayfinding signage would be useful for trail users. The map would assist by showing how all parts of the town are connected to “The Loop” as well as information about the trail features such as distances and rest stops. Such a map would be useful at the beginning of the trail as well as on the Town website to inspire visitors to take a stroll.

Build access - Continue to investigate an affordable way for the trail to cross over the creek to the golf course and sports fields. This area is a highly utilized recreation area for both residents and visitors.

Keep parks functional and safe - The Markstad Park is beautifully treed and shady. The main play structure is adequate but although the old swings may be fun, they are not CSA approved and can be very dangerous, with possible liability implications. The Markstad Park does not appear to be well used. Consider trying to determine what would be required to make it more appealing for families.

Develop a turf management plan - There are over 42 acres of turf that are carefully groomed. There may be some areas that would be just as attractive and functional with less frequent mowing. For example, the mowing on the highways is done from shoulder to fence line. Perhaps an 8-to-10-foot ribbon cut along the road would be adequate for sightlines and for weed control leaving the rest as natural grasses and native wildflowers. Sport fields need to be cut short but any passive use areas benefit from a cut that is 3 to 4 inches long. The longer the shaft of the grass, the healthier the grass, weeds are choked out, and the soil remains cooler and retains moisture longer.

Consistency in public furnishings - As public furnishings such as benches, refuse/recycle containers and signage need replacement, select a design that is attractive, durable, and consistent. If the Town decides on a branding program, then the same colours and logo could be used on all site furnishings.

2024 Evaluation Form

| PLANT AND FLORAL DISPLAYS | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| <p>This category evaluates the efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions and residents to design, plan, execute, and maintain plant and 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. It also pertains to flowerbeds, carpet bedding, containers, baskets and window boxes.</p> | | |
| | Max | Actual |
| Municipal | | |
| Floral Display Plan of Action Integration into overall landscape plan and distribution through community. Concept and design including sustainable design | 15 | 13 |
| Diversity of Displays Flowerbeds, raised beds, planters, hanging baskets, window boxes, carpet bedding, mosaics | 20 | 15.5 |
| Diversity of Plants Annuals, perennials, bulbs, grasses, woody plants, natural flora, pollinator friendly plants | 10 | 6.5 |
| Maintenance Quality Maintenance to appropriate specifications and standards, best practices: watering, weeding, edging, dead heading, etc. | 20 | 16 |
| Qualified Resources Qualified personnel (including seasonal staff) and/or in place training programs and/or qualified experienced contractors | 10 | 6.5 |
| Business & Institutions | | |
| Concept and Design (including arrangement, diversity, colour of display and plants) on grounds | 15 | 11 |
| Overall Plan Contribution to, and integration with, overall community plant and floral program | 10 | 6.5 |
| Maintenance Quality of planting and maintenance: watering, weeding, edging, dead heading, etc. with demonstrated results. | 10 | 6.5 |
| Residential | | |
| Concept and Design (including arrangement, diversity, colour of display and plants) on residential properties including Pollinator gardens and/or inclusion of pollinator plants in gardens | 20 | 16 |
| Maintenance Quality of planting and maintenance with demonstrated results. | 15 | 12 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Public Participation in community projects, volunteer initiatives (including children/youth), outreach programs in plant and floral displays (including promotion, organization, etc.) | 15 | 11 |
| Community Support Financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions for community plant and floral displays activities | 15 | 11 |
| Plant and Floral Displays Total | 175.00 | 131.50 |

2024 Evaluation Form

PLANT AND FLORAL DISPLAYS

Observations:

Over 30 hanging baskets, 17 boxes, and 3 barrels of beautiful annuals maintained by Public Works throughout Elk Point, are very impressive. Utilizing the local compost with the potting mix has resulted in very healthy plants with vibrant blooms. Congratulations to Public Works on an outstanding job in caring so well for the baskets and planters!

The Community Garden project began with an idea in the fall of 2022. It is located in the center of the community, close to the historical mural display. There are currently 9 raised beds with 2 being offered to the nearby daycare and outreach school. With a seniors' complex close by, this is a fantastic site to engage multiple generations. Interest is growing as there is a waiting list for next year. Congratulations on this great community initiative!

There are lovely floral displays throughout the community including at a seniors' residence and some industrial businesses. This consistency enhances the pride of the community.

There is a unique "rock garden" in front of the elementary school. A member of the community repurposed an unattractive space into the "Tiger Garden" reflecting the mascot of the school, "Tiggy" the Tiger. Some of the students and families have painted rocks to add to the garden.

A member of the CiB committee has embraced native plants in her garden, which are more resilient and require less maintenance than non-native plants.



Recommendations:

Educate the community about invasive plants - The downtown pocket garden on the corner by the Co-op is a colourful floral display. Many colourful species of flowers add visual interest. However, some of the plants currently growing are considered invasive and could cause issues in other areas if seeds spread. It is important to educate the community about invasive and problem plants. Refer to the brochure, Grow Me Instead from the Alberta Invasive Species Council at www.abinvasives.ca

Continue to encourage community engagement – to recognize and encourage curb appeal consider a yard of the week and maybe business display of the week by supplying a sign to display prominently and the recipient chooses the next yard of the week and passes it along. The Town website would have a running recognition. Flowers are sold as a fundraiser for the high school graduation – this a good way to create interest in floral beautification amongst the youth. Continue to support and recognize this endeavour by informing this group of the CiB Colour of the Year so the displays can be unified throughout town.

2024 Evaluation Form

Expand the Community Garden – As with private gardens, the Community Garden crops would benefit from the addition of native plants to increase the pollination of the vegetable crops and could also help educate the younger generation of the importance of insects in food production. The community garden is an excellent site for a display garden featuring native pollinator plants. Signage would be important to make this an educational feature. A properly maintained compost area would also be a functional and educational feature. The plans for a gazebo and a children’s play area will encourage greater use.

Check interest in a gardening group - Put feelers out to gauge interest in a garden club or Horticulture Society. Such organizations can be very beneficial as a way to share information, foster enthusiasm and generate greater interest in the community.

Incorporate the Colour of the Year - Communities in Bloom has chosen a colour of the year since 2020. Refer to the National Communities in Bloom website or Facebook page to learn what the chosen colour is before ordering flowers from the local greenhouse. Using a particular colour offers a subtle theme through the florals distributed in the community.

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.

