



## **2024 ANNUAL REPORT TO STRATFORD CITY COUNCIL**

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**Committee Name: Communities in Bloom**

**Date Submitted: December 06, 2024**

### **1. Outline of accomplishments/projects completed in 2024:**

#### **Communities in Bloom Competition**

The Communities in Bloom Committee celebrated its 30th consecutive year in the program. Further, Stratford participated in the International Challenge (medium category) and received a "5 Bloom GOLD" rating. Stratford was also awarded the Best Downtown Area Award at the National Symposium. Furthermore, Stratford has been selected to host the 2025 National Symposium.

#### **Ted Blowes Memorial / Peace Gardens (Butterfly Gardens)**

The garden continues to reflect the committee's ongoing commitment to both our community and the memory of Ted Blowes.

A new tulip garden bloomed in spring, honoring Ted's memory. Iris, tulip, and hyacinth bulbs were planted in the fall of 2024 to bloom in Spring 2025.

Rare Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies visited Ted's garden this summer. Three Pipe Vines were added to the garden to provide additional habitat and entice more to take up residence.

In honor of CIB's 30th anniversary, a new yellow metal bench was purchased to replace an old bench near the waterfall.

Additionally, 12 native pollinator trees were planted in a circle along the pathway between Ted's garden and Gallery Stratford this fall. This is part of the recommendations of Scott Wentworth, the landscaper who designed a plan as part of the \$25,000 Landscape Design Award Stratford's CIB won from CIB National in 2021. It

is our goal to partner with Kevin Bonnell and Indigenous youth for a project yet to be determined within this area in 2025.

Monarch butterfly releases are carried out in Ted's Garden to connect visitors to nature. The garden continues to mature and is now a destination for many in their visit to Stratford.

### **Planter Day**

Our yearly Planter Day was a great success. Flowers and milkweed plants were handed out to encourage people to create Monarch habitat.

### **Citizen's Recognition Program**

Six gardens were selected to receive the Miracle-Gro "Best Garden Selection" award, showing our appreciation for their efforts toward making Stratford beautiful.

### **Pumpkin Parade**

This year, we were pleased to celebrate this much-beloved community event, marking the 12th anniversary of the annual Pumpkin Parade. In conjunction with the Civic Beautification and Environmental Awareness Committee (CBEAC), the committee looks forward to an even bigger event in 2025 and continues to educate the community on proper pumpkin disposal and creative ways to utilize them. This initiative helps divert pumpkins from our landfill. Additionally, we appreciate the assistance provided by many volunteers, including the Royal Canadian Air Cadets (19 Squadron Stratford).

### **Pollinator Pathway**

The Pollinator Pathway project began in 2018, thanks to a grant from TD Canada Trust. The pathway, located between the Railway Station and Erie Street, saw the planting of 12 native trees along the pathway near Ted's Garden, instead of extending the Pollinator Pathway along the railway tracks on St. David Street. This project will continue in future years.

### **Porous Pave**

This year, we continued with the Porous Pave program, enhancing the experience for those who enjoy sitting on benches in our park system.

### **Winter Lights / Light Displays**

Communities in Bloom is part of the overall Winter Lights Program. This year, the lights will be coordinated by Destination Stratford to ensure cohesive programming.

Lights were added to the area near the waterfall in Confederation Park to match the lights on the bridge in Ted's garden.

The committee continues to ensure the maintenance of the snowflakes that adorn our parks in winter. This year, they continue to be used as part of the much larger Lights on Stratford program.

## **2. Summary of how the Advisory Committee's mandate in the Terms of Reference is reflected in the Committee's accomplishments/projects for 2024:**

The mandate of the Committee is:

- To foster civic pride, environmental protection and beautification, through community participation
  - We meet this portion of the mandate by participating in the National CIB competition; recognizing civic pride through the Citizen's Recognition Program; working with local schools and community groups to educate and encourage new gardeners and protecting our environment with the Pollinator Pathway and the Peace Garden.
- To improve the tidiness, appearance and visual appeal of neighbourhoods, parks, open spaces and streets
  - We accomplished this portion of the mandate by implementing the Citizen Recognition Program, working with the Parks Department to ready the city for the CIB competition, expanding the Pollinator Pathway and enhancing the Ted Blowes Memorial / Peace Garden
  - The committee continues to advocate for gateway signs
- To focus on environmental awareness and preservation of heritage and culture
  - The Annual Planter Day encourages residents to be environmentally aware. The Pollinator Pathway and the Peace Garden focus on improving the environment within our borders and beyond by providing the necessities of life for bees, butterflies and other insects.

- To coordinate a host program as required
  - Our participation in the CIB competitions meets this part of the mandate. Further Stratford will host the 2025 National Symposium
- To be financially sustainable
  - We operate within our budget

### **3. Summary of 2024 recommendations:**

Recommendations Provided to Sub-committee, Committee or Council:

- Support for the 2025 National Symposium
- Encourage and recommend the implementation of "Gateway Signage" (Wayfinding)

### **4. Please summarize how your 2024 projects/plans have reflected the City's strategic priorities:**

Our project plans for 2024 align with the following strategic priorities:

- Mobility, Accessibility, and Design Excellence
- Strengthen our Plans, Strategies, and Partnerships

### **5. Comments regarding impact of COVID-19 on your Committee's operations in 2024:**

This year, the Communities in Bloom Committee returned to full operational activity. Our activities involve direct engagement with the citizens of our community. Through education and awareness to celebrating holiday events, our activities included providing our "Planter Day" and running the Pumpkin Parade once again.