

America in Bloom 2022 Evaluation Report



Community: Dyer, Indiana
Evaluation Dates: June 16-17, 2022

Lead Advisor: Cheryl Corson
Co-Advisor: Tim France

America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play – benefitting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage and planting pride through volunteerism.

Seven Criteria (Codes)	Possible Points	Actual Points	Percentage
1. Community Vitality (CV)	84.00	26.00	30.95%
2. Flowers (FL)	88.00	27.00	30.68%
3. Landscaped Areas (LA)	80.00	35.00	43.75%
4. Urban Forestry (UF)	74.00	34.00	45.94%
5. Environmental Efforts (EE)	94.00	48.00	51.06%
6. Celebrating Heritage (CH)	62.00	19.00	30.64%
7. Overall Impression (OI)	76.00	40.00	52.63%
Other			
8. Evaluation Tour Preparation & Actions (ET)	13.00	5.00	38.46%
Scoring			
Total Points and Percentage	571.00	234.00	40.98%
Star Rating	5		
Community Involvement Total	80	22	27.50%

Star ratings are based on overall percentage.

1 star = 0% - 9.99%	2 stars = 10% - 10.99%	3 stars = 20% - 29.99%	4 stars = 30% - 39.99%	5 stars = 40% - 49.99%
6 stars = 50% - 59.99%	7 stars = 60% - 69.99%	8 stars = 70% - 79.99%	9 stars = 80% - 89.99%	10 stars = 90% - 100%

Community representatives to receive the Evaluation Report (three minimum)		
Name	Title	Email
Mary Tanis	Chair, Dyer in Bloom	mtanis@townofdye.com
David Hein	Dyer Town Manager	dhein@townofdye.com
Bryan Lane	Dyer Stormwater Manager	blane@townofdye.com
Nanette Wargo	Dyer Park Board President	nwargo@townofdye.com

GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION:

Communities are required to provide the following prior to evaluation:

- Community Profile organized to follow the criteria and metrics. For repeat communities, call out what is new and/or implemented due to advisors' recommendations.
- Evaluation Tour Itinerary with start and finish times for each day
- Community Map with community boundaries and the tour route
- Communities are responsible for addressing the metrics in the Community Profile, Evaluation Tour Itinerary, and during the Evaluation Tour.

The areas to be scored:

Advisors will review Community Profiles, Community Maps, and Evaluation Tour Itineraries to confirm the appropriateness of the areas to be evaluated and contact communities prior to the tour so adjustments can be made.

- All areas (municipal, commercial, and residential) within the boundaries of the entrant's community/municipality (except as noted below) are scored and a representative portion of all areas must be included.
- Property to be scored, whether public or private, must be subject to the codes and regulations of the entrant's community/municipality.
- When a property does not meet these requirements, but the community's volunteers significantly impact the property with labor and/or funding, then advisors may include in their scoring the property not subject to the codes and regulations of the entrant community.
- A community may request recommendations for areas toured but not scored.

Metrics are noted with unique codes based on the criteria. Ratings include:

N/A (Not Applicable): Communities should strive to implement all metrics; however, advisors will use N/A when a metric is not scorable in a community. An N/A metric is not included in the point totals and does not affect percentages. Examples when N/A may apply in a metric: commercial/business areas do not exist; state or county statutes prevent implementation of a metric.

Not Started (0 pts.): programs or procedures are not in place.

Launched (1 pt.): programs or procedures are in place but not fully realized.

Achieved (2 pts.): programs or procedures are implemented but could be improved.

Surpassing (3 pts.): programs or procedures are well-implemented.

Excelling (4 pts.): programs or procedures are exceptional.

NS (Not Scored): preset in the Advisors' Discretion metric's point box for when a score there is not appropriate.

Advisors' Discretion (N/A, 3-4 pts.): advisors may add and score an item not in the metrics. This item must be an unusual or newly implemented project, program, or initiative that can be repeated in other communities and perhaps used as a future metric.

Other:

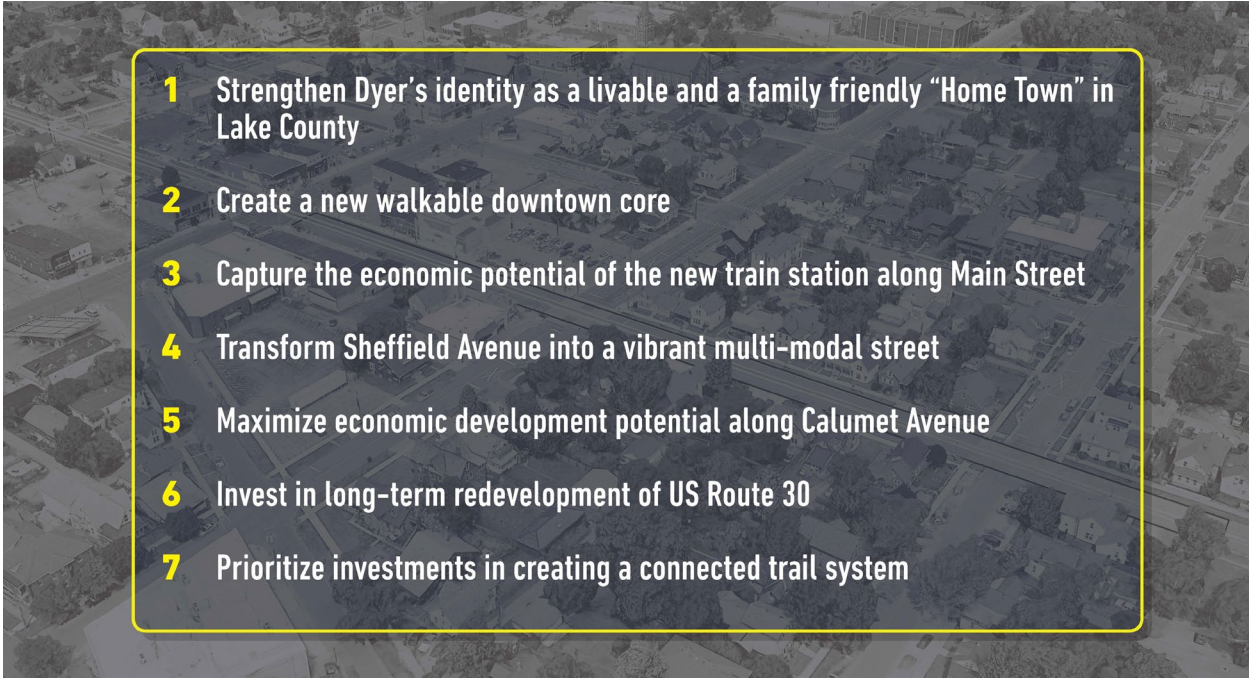
- This Evaluation Report's scoring, general observations, and general and criteria recommendations are based upon the community's efforts including its levels of participation in, or implementation of the metrics in each of the criteria.
- Future projects and programs are not scored.
- The scoring for the seven evaluation criteria is adjusted to the climate and environmental conditions of the community's location. Make sure the advisors are made aware of any challenges that were faced during the year.

General Observations and Recommendations (recommendations are indicated in *italics*):

Congratulations to Dyer in Bloom and the town of Dyer for hosting a return site visit with America in Bloom advisors for the first time since 2019. The town is on the cusp of significant growth and development, some of which will be in place by next year. Dyer in Bloom volunteers and city staff gave generously of their time during our 2-day visit and we thank them all.

Near the conclusion of our site visit we learned more about plans for the West Lake Corridor, the first extension of commuter rail in over a century. This \$852 million dollar project will extend train lines 9 miles south from East Chicago into Dyer. Assistant City Manager Frank Jachim later shared electronic files containing design plans for Main Street near the future station, and files presenting the financial and economic development implications of the project.

Sherri Ziller, Interim CEO of the Indiana Regional Development Authority states that “the planned improvements along the South Shore corridor and the creation of the West Lake line will provide a catalyst for development in Northwest Indiana. Over the next 20 years, this will change the face of Northwest Indiana.” This work involves a TOD, or Transportation Development District, which promotes TOD (transit-oriented development). TOD “increases housing choices by including a variety of housing types (such as homes on smaller lots, condominiums, townhomes, apartments). Consultants state the following benefits to Dyer:

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- 1** Strengthen Dyer’s identity as a livable and a family friendly “Home Town” in Lake County
 - 2** Create a new walkable downtown core
 - 3** Capture the economic potential of the new train station along Main Street
 - 4** Transform Sheffield Avenue into a vibrant multi-modal street
 - 5** Maximize economic development potential along Calumet Avenue
 - 6** Invest in long-term redevelopment of US Route 30
 - 7** Prioritize investments in creating a connected trail system

TOD is predicated upon different housing types including multi-family units and some rental apartments, which represents a departure from the predominant PUD, single family housing in Dyer. It will be interesting to see how the community accepts this change, which is a cultural shift as well as a shift in the civic built environment. Plans for Main Street and updates to the Route 30 corridor, so central to Dyer are well documented in the professional design studies provided by the city. Since this was not a focus of Dyer in Bloom it would be redundant to describe them in this Evaluation Report. Similarly, the town’s 2020 Comprehensive Plan is at:

https://www.townofdye.com/Portals/0/Content/Planning/Town_of_Dyer_Comprehensive_Plan_2020.pdf?ver=gksfS9cJKPGmmK6zR_57Fg%3d%3d.

Dyer in Bloom activities are peripheral to these major developments, but they don't have to be. DIB members expressed some frustration to be regarded as merely 'women who plant flowers.' They further said that they wish to increase their volunteer base from current levels of under 20 people.

To accomplish this, outreach to a wider volunteer demographic is needed. Meetings may be held at different times of day so that working professionals unable to make a weekday afternoon meeting may attend. DIB member efforts will benefit from having a better sense of how city agencies function and how funds are allocated. This knowledge will be gained by attending public meetings, not just those of the Parks department, but, for example, of Public Works, and the Building Departments. Long-time DIB champion Mary Tanis has 12 years' experience as a Town Council member, yet without her direct involvement, other DIB members are without this level of understanding. America in Bloom will serve as a greater community development tool the more engaged participants are in the full scope of the AIB criteria and metrics. Dyer in Bloom will surely grow from digging deeper into these evaluation tools.

Dyer's Parks Department head left his position in early June, and DIB Secretary and Park Board President Nanette Wargo stepped up as interim Parks Superintendent. Hopefully a new director will be identified, capable of leading the department in ways that harmonize with the huge infrastructure developments currently planned. It seemed odd that for a state renowned for basketball, 77-acre Central Park did not have any basketball courts. We recommend that some be added to the existing baseball and soccer courts in Central Park to reflect on Indiana's nationally prominent high school basketball presence. A great piece on Indiana basketball is: [Why Is Indiana So Passionate About Basketball? | American Eagle Goals \(aegoals.com\)](#) .



Dyer in Bloom Advisors and committee members at the Buffalo at Route 30 and Hart Avenue

Community Vitality (CV) Criterion Definition	Metrics Ratings (NS = Not Scored)					
1. COMMUNITY VITALITY (CV): policies, programs, activities, and facilities that lead to a vibrant community and a sense of well-being. Includes libraries, community centers, arts/cultural museums; and parks, playgrounds, dog parks, sports fields, water activities, trails, and other outdoor recreational opportunities	Not Applicable N/A	Not Started (0 pts)	Launched (1 pt)	Achieved (2 pts)	Surpassing (3 pts)	Excelling (4 pts)
a. Leadership and Policy						
CV.a.01 - Municipal volunteer boards are in place and interfacing with municipality and businesses				X		
CV.a.02 - Municipality offers grants to neighborhood associations for enhancements		X				
CV.a.03 - Master plan in place for public green space and parks				X		
CV.a.04 - ADA accessibility in public areas and other programs for inclusion				X		
CV.a.05 - Promotion of alternative transportation: pedestrian, bicycling, car/van pools, and/or ride sharing				X		
b. Facilities and Events						
CV.b.01 - Outdoor recreation facilities meet community needs: parks, playgrounds, splash pads, dog parks, sports fields, sports courts, swimming pools, golf courses, kayak/canoe trails, public access to water bodies, etc.					X	
CV.b.02 - Walking, biking, and exercise trail network in place and is safe, well lit, and connects to a larger network				X		
CV.b.03 - Performances/events for art, dance, theatre, music, and/or cinema available			X			
CV.b.04 - Run/walk/bike/kayak/canoe events are held			X			
CV.b.05 - Benches and seating available near walking, exercise, and playground areas				X		
CV.b.06 - Structures, shade sails, or trees provide shade for spectators and/or participants				X		
CV.b.07 - Play areas exist, age-appropriate ranges of equipment offered, and ADA complaint and conform to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and inspected by Certified Playground Safety Inspector					X	
CV.b.08 - Public library/resources center is available for all ages and abilities				X		
CV.b.09 - Community center is available				X		
CV.b.10 - Farmers' Market(s) is available		X				

c. Community Involvement						
CV.c.01 - Community gardening sites are in use		X				
CV.c.02 - Level of participation in food banks, hunger-relief, Plant a Row for the Hungry (GardenComm initiative), etc.		X				
CV.c.03 - Participation in civic events such as Bike to Work Days, Walk to School Days, etc.		X				
CV.c.04 - Voluntary (non-mandated HOA) neighborhood organizations in place		X				
CV.c.05 - Programs in place to encourage youth involvement		X				
CV.c.06 - Recognition programs for volunteers		X				
d. Advisors' Discretion: Recognition by the Advisors of an item of special note						
CV.d.01 - Advisors to enter text below	X	NS	NS	NS		
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percentage	
1. Community Vitality (CV)	84		26		30.95%	

Community Vitality (CV) Recommendations:

Dyer is proud of their parks, and they should be. They have updated the parks with new equipment surfacing which are standards compliant. They are currently in the process of improving a few of the parks including the Central Park baseball fields. They have added new impact attenuating Poured in Place rubber surfaces to the playground equipment use zones. There are lightening alert systems in place at all the parks for added safety.

Dyer has a 32-person police force and 2 fire stations locations that now have two full-time firefighters.



There are outdoor events in the summer such as Summerfest, Movies in the Park, town wide garage sales and National night out.

In many residential areas, there are no sidewalks. People walking dogs or walking with their children to the park or learning to ride a bike must use the street. There are also no real bicycle lanes or exclusive bike trails.

It is recommended that the next comprehensive plan require sidewalks and or bike paths in new developments.

The Lincoln Highway runs through Dyer, traffic is especially heavy in that area.



It is recommended that the Dyer develop a plan in conjunction with the State to allow safe places for pedestrians and bikers to cross the highway.

The parks seem to focus on children and recreation for children and playground equipment for children. Dyer is a commuter town. When adults return from work, they also need places to go or things to do to reduce stress. *It is recommended that the parks department explore a trail that can include some obstacles or exercise areas to allow these adults to have a place to exercise.*



Dyer did not appear to have any community gardening sites. Perhaps some people have their own gardens but having a community garden gives people of like minds an opportunity to gather and learn. It is also a place to teach youth about the value of gardening. It is a great way to recruit DIB volunteers.

It is recommended that DIP make efforts to establish a community garden.

DIB also expressed the need for more volunteers and requested ways to recruit volunteers. When the accomplishments of DIB are published

the group will gain greater recognition and admiration. People want to be involved in successful and popular groups. The group can publicize its accomplishment via social media and also in the city newsletter. They can also place help wanted ads in the city newsletter. It might be helpful to advertise for specific needs. For instance: help wanted – a person with a background in finances; a person to supervise operation of a gardening program; a person to act as watering supervisor; or a plant parent to help plant or maintain one container. The possibilities are endless. If you keep it simple, more volunteers will find you.



Flowers Criterion Definition	Metrics Ratings (NS = Not Scored)					
2. FLOWERS (FL): flowering annuals, perennials, bulbs, tropical plants, flowering topiaries, and colorful foliage and/or cut plant material for season-round interest for displays in containers, hanging baskets, window boxes, raised planters, trellises, and in-ground beds	Not Applicable N/A	Not Started (0 pts)	Launched (1 pt)	Achieved (2 pts)	Surpassing (3 pts)	Excelling (4 pts)
a. Leadership and Policy						
FL.a.01 - Public or private management of flower displays				X		
FL.a.02 - Program to encourage, expand understanding of role and importance of pollinator habitats						
b. Plan of Action						
FL.b.01 - Action plan developed each season for procurement, scheduling, planting, and maintenance of flower displays			X			
FL.b.02 - Recognition program(s) in place for attractive displays by businesses and/or residential		X				
FL.b.03 - Demonstration/display garden(s) with labelled flowers in place and promoted		X				
FL.b.04 - Effective communication about selection and care of flowers for beautification and pollinator habitats		X				
c. Design						
FL.c.01 - Unity and Variety: plant combinations create visual interest and dramatic effect while appearing coordinated				X		
FL.c.02 - Suitability of Plant Selections: plants selected for location and environmental conditions			X			
FL.c.03 - Distribution and Location: displays found throughout the community			X			
FL.c.04 - Location: displays are located to serve as focal points			X			
FL.c.05 - Seasonal Displays: seasonal displays with spring, summer, fall, and/or holiday displays			X			
FL.c.06 - Scale: if hanging baskets are in use, their size is in scale to their surroundings	X					
FL.c.07 - Scale: if containers are in use, their size is in scale to their surroundings			X			
F.L.c.08 – Scale: inground flower displays are designed with mature plant heights in mind				X		
FL.c.09 - Color: pleasing color combinations (monochromatic, analogous, and/or complementary) are used				X		
FL.c.10 - Form: uses a number of different textures in all floral displays				X		

d. Maintenance						
FL.d.01 - Watering procedures to maintain growth in place				X		
FL.d.02 - Fertilization: appropriate fertilization procedures using slow-release, liquid fertilizers, and/or soil amendments				X		
FL.d.03 - Grooming: regular pruning, dead-heading, removal and replacement of dead plants				X		
FL.d.04 - Plant health strategies in place to monitor and manage pests and diseases (IPM-Integrated Pest Management)			X			
FL.d.05 - Health and Vigor: plants are robust and floriferous			X			
e. Community Involvement						
FL.e.01 - Volunteers provide donations and/or funds and/or participate in the design, planting, and/or care of flower displays				X		
FL.e.02 - Civic groups, garden clubs, Master Gardeners, school programs, etc., sponsor plant sales, plant swaps, provide information, or educational sessions that contribute to the quality and implementation of the community's flower displays			X			
f. Advisors' Discretion: Recognition by the Advisors of an item of special note						
FL.f.01 - Advisors to enter text below	X	NS	NS	NS		
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percentage	
2. Flowers (FL)	88		27		30.68%	

Flowers (FL) Recommendations:

It is obvious that Dyer in Bloom (DIB) has a passion for flowers. The floral displays in the ground and in containers at the Town's offices, police department and nearby offices make this clear. The lengths the organization goes to by filling gallon jugs to water displays is heartwarming. These projects were completed on a shoestring budget.



The DIB group, notwithstanding these constrictions, is planning to assume responsibility for the new beds at the ballfields of Central Park. Just this year, DIB has come under the Town of Dyer as part of Parks and Recreation. This should be considered as recognition by the Town that DIB is a legitimate part of the Town and can help them with their projects. DIB now has a seat at the table where decisions are made, and their voices can be heard.

It is recommended the DIB make its own long-term plan concerning floral displays within the Town.

Start by making a dream list without being restricted by costs or convenience. Think big. Decide what you want the Town to look like. Consider all options. Do you want containers or in ground beds or both? If containers, do you want a special look for DIB. Do research. Tour other public gardens for ideas. Talk to other AIB communities. The DIB members that went to lunch at the Briar Ridge Golf Course were impressed by their floral displays of

begonias and lantana. If the golf course can do it, then you can too.



Once the dream list is made, narrow the list to three choices. Once you have the top three, it is recommended that you identify any anticipated problems like irrigation and watering, equipment you may need, cost for permanent items and for annual maintenance and labor. Do not let these issues deter you. The next step is to problem solve the identified issues. Do not let anything keep you from asking for everything you want for the town. It is not about each of you as individuals or the DIB group, it is about improving the town.

After you have identified projects and problem solve the issues and find ways to resolve them, *it is recommended you determine the cost and then find ways to finance your projects.* Ask the Town, ask for part of the budget of Parks & Recreation, trade products for services, fund raise, approach local neighborhoods that surround each of the parks. Do fund raisers at the Town festival and other activities.

It is also recommended that you make efforts to recruit youth. Use the schools. You can trade your educational abilities and services to the schools and teachers in exchange for their assistance in planting or weeding. When a scout comes to your door asking you to by something for a fundraiser, ask them for the contact information of their leaders so that you can contact their leaders to see if their organization can help with community service. Set up a booth at Summer Fest or any other community events scheduled at the parks.



It is also important to be patient. When dealing with the government and citizens as a whole, DIB will need to show the Town you are in for the long haul before they will commit to follow your lead. However, when they see the difference make, they will follow your lead.



Landscaped Areas Criterion Definition	Metrics Ratings (NS = Not Scored)					
	Not Applicable N/A	Not Started (0 pts)	Launched (1 pt)	Achieved (2 pts)	Surpassing (3 pts)	Excelling (4 pts)
3. LANDSCAPED AREAS (LA): plants and related programs for the leadership, design, installation, and maintenance of landscape. Includes shrubs, ornamental grasses, vines, succulents, edibles, evergreen topiaries, turf, and groundcovers						
a. Leadership and Policy						
LA.a.01 - Management of planting public landscaped areas				X		
LA.a.02 - Municipal landscape ordinance requires landscaping and maintenance for new and/or improved commercial development			NS	X	NS	NS
LA.a.03 - Municipal ordinance requiring landscaping for new residential developments			NS	X	NS	NS
b. Plan of Action						
LA.b.01 - Planning for restoration of natural areas				X		
LA.b.02 - Strategy for management of invasive plants				X		
LA.b.03 - Demonstration/display gardens with interpretive signage (pollinator, wildlife, native, low-water use, etc.) in place and promoted			X			
LA.b.04 - Effective communication of “Right Plant in the Right Place” and other planting issues			X			
LA.b.05 - Recognition program for attractive landscapes in place		X				
LA.b.06 - School gardening programs in place for multiple grades		X				
c. Design						
LA.c.01 - Unity and Variety: plant combinations create visual interest while appearing coordinated				X		
LA.c.02 - Suitability of Plant Selections: plants selected for location and environmental conditions				X		
LA.c.03 - Distribution/Locations: landscaping found throughout the community and at key locations				X		
d. Maintenance						
LA.d.01 - Grooming: pruning of plants, removal and/or replacement of dead plants					X	
LA.d.02 - Plant Health: Plants display health and vigor, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies in place to monitor and manage diseases and pests				X		
LA.d.03 – Mulch from renewable and sustainable sources is used by the municipality in appropriate places				X		
LA.d.04 - Weed Management: strategies in place to manage weeds (removal, mulching, etc.)				X		
LA.d.05 - Health and Vigor: plants are robust				X		
LA.d.06 - Turf Care: proper mowing, edging, and replacement of dead turf				X		
LA.d.07 - Turf Health: Grassy areas display health and vigor, and procedures such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) are in place to monitor and manage diseases, pests, and weeds				X		

e. Community Involvement						
LA.e.01 - Volunteers assist in funding, design, installation, and/or care of landscaped areas and/or turf in public areas			X			
LA.e.02 - Community educational programs offered related to plant material, including specialty gardens			X			
f. Advisors' Discretion: Recognition by the Advisors of an item of special note						
LA.f.01 - Advisors to enter text below	X	NS	NS	NS		
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percentage	
3. Landscaped Areas (LA)	80		35		43.75%	

Landscaped Areas (LA) Recommendations:

Our tour began at the town offices at the intersection of Route 30 (Lincoln Highway) and Hart Avenue, where we observed plantings at the town office property and adjacent park, the gateway Buffalo across the street, and at the nearby Public Safety Complex. Dyer in Bloom members described their watering method as filling and carrying one gallon water jugs from their cars to plant beds, including at the town office. They described seeking more volunteers so that more people could share in carrying more gallons of water.

Dyer in Bloom must negotiate with the town for use of their existing water spigot to care for the beds that they maintain. Any security feature may surely be worked out with the correct people at the table. With so much more that may be accomplished, there is little to be gained (beyond upper body strength) in this labor-intensive watering regime.



Note that plant beds are some distance away from the parking lot in which volunteers' cars are parked.

Mulch at the gateway Buffalo sculpture plant bed consisted of fresh wood chips, some quite large in particle size. This kind of material is considered 'hot' as it has not yet decomposed. When derived from material other than hardwood it also leaches nitrogen from the soil. It also looks rough and less manicured in appearance. *We encourage DIB to procure shredded hardwood mulch for town plant beds. This mulch may be raked a couple of times a year to maintain its fresh appearance.*



Generally, the more densely a bed is planted, the less chance weed seeds have to land and sprout, and the greater the moisture is able to stay in the soil because the foliage is shading it, slowing down evaporation from the soil. At the public landscaped areas we observed, planting were sparse, and in some cases, exceedingly so.

We encourage DIB to procure enough plants to fully cover plant bed soil area, even if that means having smaller areas. The plants will grow better, and the soil will be better able to sustain them.



Urban Forestry Criterion Definition	Metrics Ratings (NS = Not Scored)					
4. URBAN FORESTRY (UF): trees and related programs for the leadership, management, design, installation, and maintenance on public and private lands	Not Applicable N/A	Not Started (0 pts)	Launched (1 pt)	Achieved (2 pts)	Surpassing (3 pts)	Excelling (4 pts)
a. Leadership and Policy						
UF.a.01 - Qualified personnel are on staff or accessing trained individuals such as arborists and/or urban foresters			X			
UF.a.02 - Tree board/commission and/or department is active				X		
UF.a.03 - Municipal ordinance(s) enacted/enforced for tree preservation on public and/or private property		X	NS		NS	NS
UF.a.04 - Municipal ordinance(s) enacted/enforced for protection of trees during construction		X	NS		NS	NS
UF.a.05 - Currently a Tree City USA community			NS	X	NS	NS
b. Plan of Action						
UF.b.01 - Tree inventory for public areas is complete and current within the past ten years				X		
UF.b.02 - Annual tree planting program for public areas				X		
UF.b.03 - Management strategies for removal of dead, imperiled, and invasive trees in public areas			X			
UF.b.04 - Policy for recognition and protection of historic trees		X				
UF.b.05 - Effective communication to residents of recommended trees, proper planting, "Right Tree in the Right Place," mulching, placement and spacing, and/or maintenance				X		
c. Design						
UF.c.01 - Variety: current practices include appropriate selection and diversity of tree species being planted						X
UF.c.02 - Placement: current practices include appropriate spacing and planting area for optimal root and canopy growth					X	
UF.c.03 - Planting: current practices include correct tree planting depth (trunk flare at/above grade)				X		
UF.c.04 - Arboretum/Park in place with labels and descriptive signage		X				
d. Maintenance						
UF.d.01 - Tree Health: strategies in place to monitor and manage diseases and pests				X		
UF.d.02 - Watering, mulching, and pruning for new trees: procedures for watering and proper mulching (i.e., no volcano mulching) in place and effectively communicated to the public				X		
UF.d.03 - Pruning for established trees: appropriate pruning, removal of dead limbs, and canopies raised adequately above vehicle and pedestrian areas				X		

UF.e.01 - Policy for donations to tree planting in public areas (memorial trees, etc.) in place				X		
UF.e.02 - Community participates in Arbor Day activities					X	
UF.e.03 - Volunteers assist in tree planting and/or care				X		
f. Advisors' Discretion: Recognition by the Advisors of an item of special note						
UF.f.01 - Advisors to enter text below	X	NS	NS	NS		
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percentage	
4. Urban Forestry (UF)	74		34		45.94%	

Urban Forestry (UF) Recommendations:

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission hosts a program called, CommuniTree ([CommuniTree - NIRPC](#)) which the Dyer website mentions with respect to tree planting in some of the town parks in prior years. *We recommend that in future AIB Community Profiles, this type of activity is included and all tree planting activities, including any Arbor Day Foundation celebrations are outlined for AIB advisor background prior to their annual site visits.*



During our site visit we saw some tree mulching practices that have fallen out of favor. One is “volcano mulching” which has numerous ways of impacting tree health. Another is the use of landscape fabric, which invariably degrades.

We encourage the town department responsible for tree care to remove all volcano mulching and all landscape fabric from tree planter boxes and replace it with properly applied mulch.



Dyer prides itself on its tree care. It is a Tree City USA, as designated by the Arbor Day Foundation ([Tree City USA at arborday.org](https://www.treecityusa.org/)). At some of the town's parks, we observed new tree plantings with nursery stock that should have been rejected by the project foreman on site. Some of these trees were planted improperly as well. *We recommend that all new park tree plantings be inspected by a qualified professional and replaced as need by nursery stock compliant with AmericanHort standards ([American Nursery Stock Standards - AmericanHort](https://www.americanhort.com/standards)).* Here are some examples from our site visit:



Environmental Efforts Criterion Definition	Metrics Ratings (NS = Not Scored)					
5. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS (EE): environmental leadership, policies, plans, and programs for resource conservation; pollution control; trash, recycling, and reuse; and alternative fuel vehicles	Not Applicable N/A	Not Started (0 pts)	Launched (1 pt)	Achieved (2 pts)	Surpassing (3 pts)	Excelling (4 pts)
a. Leadership and Policy						
EE.a.01 - Environmental Advisory Board(s) and/or Green Team(s) in place		X	NS		NS	NS
EE.a.02 - Electric/alternative fuel vehicle(s) used by municipality			X			
EE.a.03 - Electric vehicle charging station(s) provided				X		
EE.a.04 - Stormwater management policies in place and enforced					X	
EE.a.05 - Pet waste policies in place and enforced					X	
b. Plan of Action						
EE.b.01 - Sustainability Action Plan in place			X			
EE.b.02 - Effective municipal/civic education about environmental efforts for children and adults				X		
EE.b.03 - Effective notification to community regarding pesticide applications and mosquito spraying					X	
c. Resource Conservation						
EE.c.01 - Bio-swales and/or rain gardens in place to reduce stormwater run-off pollution					X	
EE.c.02 - Home energy audit/incentives available				X		
EE.c.03 - Waterwise irrigation in place			X			
EE.c.04 - Low-flow water device incentives available		X				
d. Trash, Recycling, and Reuse Management						
EE.d.01 - Residential curbside trash collection is available and/or required					X	
EE.d.02 - Residential curbside recycling collection and/or collection points are in place					X	
EE.d.03 - Recycling containers available in public areas and for private use, and standardized and/or consistent labels used on containers				X		
EE.d.04 - Yard waste composting pick-up and/ or drop-off available					X	
EE.d.05 - Prescription drug drop-off(s) available				X		
EE.d.06 - Hazardous waste and/or electronics waste collection or drop-off(s) available				X		
EE.d.07 - Plastic bag and/or foam container collection point(s) available				X		
EE.d.08 - Reuse opportunities are available (clothing, books, household goods, repair initiatives, etc.)				X		

e. Community Involvement						
EE.e.01 - Community events that enhance public awareness of environmental issues and distribution of information on effective recycling (lack of contamination), i.e. Earth Day participation				X		
EE.e.02 - Garden clubs, Master Gardeners, and/or Soil and Water Conservation District, etc. provide educational opportunities for rain barrel usage, backyard habitats, and other environmental initiatives				X		
EE.e.03 - School curricula programs and events to encourage youth involvement		X				
f. Advisors' Discretion: Recognition by the Advisors of an item of special note						
EE.f.01 - Advisors to enter text below		NS	NS	NS		X
Dyer's nearly completed 2-Stage Hart Ditch project will provide extensive flooding protection while creating an attractive public park amenity.						
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percentage	
5. Environmental Efforts (EE)	94		48		51.06%	

Environmental Efforts (EE) Recommendations:

Dyer has seen increased flooding from commercial development of former farmland, a continuing trend. Main Street vehicular right of way expansion currently in planning stages further increase the amount of impervious surface.

Dyer's Plum Creek flows east toward town across the nearby Illinois border in a channel called Hart Ditch, which has become insufficient to hold stormwater from large storms across this 30 square mile tributary area. Highway closures and hospital evacuations have resulted, some severe and long lasting.

The solution to be completed in fall 2022 creates what is called a 2 Stage Channel: instead of a ditch with a single slope, a vegetated “shelf” is added mid-way up the slope to slow stormwater and give it a greater chance to be absorbed. In the process, excess nutrients are filtered out of the water by native vegetation, and sediment has a chance to settle before making its way downstream. This results in cleaner water downstream as well as reduced flooding.

Dyer Stormwater Director Bryan Lane took AIB advisors to the construction site of this impressive project to which the adjacent hospital contributed \$2 million dollars. Although mature trees had to be cut down to engineer the new slopes, Black Walnuts are being re-purposed as revetments to help hold the new stream bank. The new water channel is being integrated into a new trail system and interpretive signage in the park through which it flows will educate visitors about this innovative green infrastructure practice.



We recommend that Dyer build upon this green infrastructure effort. Knowing that the amount of impervious surface will only continue to grow, creating more flooding risk, adopt an ordinance stipulating that new residential and commercial development prove a net zero runoff calculation as a building permit requirement. Such model legislation is available from the US Environmental Protection Agency website ([Urban Runoff: Model Ordinances for Stormwater Control | US EPA](#)).

As the new Amtrak and commuter rail system are built, increasing the number of EV charging stations in Dyer will contribute to sustainability. Currently there are a few 220-volt outlets in the town office parking lot, though these are unmarked and (perhaps AIB advisor user error) at least one of them did not appear to be working.



We recommend that bona fide EV charging stations be installed at the town office complex with street signage indicating their presence. Such charging stations should be installed in proximity to the new rail stations and other public places such as the new parking lot at Central Park.

Dyer seems to have ample opportunities for recycling. The town website clearly notes pick-up days across town as well as non-municipal places for other used items including clothing and appliances ([Town of Dyer > Residents > Recycling](#)). We recommend that DIB and Master

Gardeners build upon these services and opportunities with periodic public education programs that might, for example, reward participants with a free tree or even seed packets for a certain amount of personal recycling.

Celebrating Heritage Criterion Definition	Metrics Ratings (NS = Not Scored)					
6. CELEBRATING HERITAGE (CH): recognition, designation, protection, commemoration, and celebration of historical, cultural, natural, agricultural, and industrial resources	Not Applicable N/A	Not Started (0 pts)	Launched (1 pt)	Achieved (2 pts)	Surpassing (3 pts)	Excelling (4 pts)
a. Leadership and Policy						
CH.a.01 - Historic preservation ordinance effectively provides commercial and residential designation and protection from demolition		X	NS		NS	NS
CH.a.02 - Incentives offered to promote preservation: tax credits, waived permit fees, eased setbacks, rebates, etc.		X				
CH.a.03 - Historic Preservation and/or Architectural Review Board in place and effective		X				
CH.a.04 - Historical Society is active				X		
b. Plan of Action						
CH.b.01 - Effective communication of ordinances, policies, and restoration methods	X					
CH.b.02 - National Register of Historic Places district and/or individual designations in place				X		
CH.b.03 - Natural and/or agricultural areas are protected		X				
CH.b.04 - Archives, artifacts, cemetery records, and/or oral histories collected, properly stored, or preserved				X		
CH.b.05 - Education: historical publications/websites, interpretive signage, tours, and programs in place				X		
CH.b.06 - Programs in place to encourage youth involvement, including curriculum-designated tours and available to multiple age levels				X		
c. Commemoration						
CH.c.01 - Signage in place for historic neighborhoods and/or structures		X				
CH.c.02 - Historical museum(s) and/or interpretive displays maintained				X		
CH.c.03 - Cemeteries, monuments, and/or plaques in place and well-maintained				X		
CH.c.04 - Community heritage promoted through tours (guided or self), brochures, Smartphone apps, etc.			X			
CH.c.05 - Parades, festivals, events, programs commemorating a community's heritage are held			X			
d. Community Involvement						
CH.d.01 - Volunteers participate in planning and implementing recognition of a community's heritage through historical tours, parades, festivals, etc.			X			
CH.d.02 - Volunteers participate in maintaining historical sites and structures				X		

f. Advisors' Discretion: Recognition by the Advisors of an item of special note						
CH.e.01 - Advisors to enter text below	X	NS	NS	NS		
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percentage	
6. Celebrating Heritage (CH)	62		19		30.64%	

Celebrating Heritage (CH) Recommendations:

With early roots in farming, Dyer has few if any historic structures remaining from its earliest roots.

The Dyer Historical Society and Museum, established in 1984, works hard to preserve important information about the town's founders and those who worked to build the community. The museum is a repository of



memorabilia, beginning with native Indian artifacts and moving to the present with an active program to gather family history from residents with multi-generational roots in the community. The Society remains active, working with students during the school year, hosting a speaker once a month, and maintaining the displays throughout the school year.

The History Museum is housed in the lower level of Town Hall. A display case in the main entry of Town Hall provides an excellent introduction to the collection in the lower level and induces visitors to head downstairs to see more.



The museum archives include a collection of native artifacts from the Potawatomi Tribe which lived in the area. Other collections also provide a diverse and interesting glimpse into the past. Among other collections, the museum is also home to volumes of Dyer resident family histories which are housed in the museum office. Individuals often visit to look in these books and do genealogical research.



Currently Dyer lacks a historic preservation ordinance and consequently has neither a local historic district nor local designated historic site in town, Meyer's Castle, built between 1927-1931, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The original owner, J.E. Meyer, was an herbalist and continue his practice on the grounds until 1950. In 1975, the castle and grounds were sold to the East Dyer Development Company who developed the Castlewood Subdivision of Dyer. Subsequently, the castle was again sold, rehabilitated, and served as event venue but is now closed.

St. Joseph's Church is a landmark in town visible from quite a distance in any direction. Time has taken its toll on the church and repairs are needed.

A little research indicated that early settlers were Prussian farmers, that the first railway in town was the Michigan Central Railroad and the National Lincoln Highway goes through town.

It is recommended that restoration and preservation of Meyer's Castle be explored. Perhaps the town could form a partnership with developers to restore the castle to its original splendor including the herb gardens of the original owner. The history needs to be preserved. Perhaps it could be developed as an Air B&B and visitors could experience the life of J.E. Meyer and his herbs while staying at this castle on the Lincoln Highway.

It is also recommended that someone explore the historic roots of the railway system in the area. There are many people interested in the history of the rail system.

Another recommendation would be to explore and develop the history of the Lincoln Highway and its effect on Dyer and Dyers development and Dyer's effect on the transportation systems.

History and culture bring a community together with a common bond. It can encourage people to work together when they discover how their town of Dyer came into existence and how they are part of its future history. Transportation is a key point in that history.



It appears that Dyer has intentionally not allowed overnight lodging to be established within their limits. The tax imposed on lodgers usually supports visitors' bureaus that help draw more people interested in the community. Visitors pay sales tax and buy from local merchants. Allowance of an Air B&B that provides a small hotel tax could lead to a revenue stream to support DIB efforts.

Overall Impression (OI) Criterion Definition	Metrics Ratings (NS = Not Scored)					
7. OVERALL IMPRESSION (OI): adequate and effective amenities are provided in good condition, and the community is welcoming and attractive	Not Applicable N/A	Not Started (0 pts)	Launched (1 pt)	Achieved (2 pts)	Surpassing (3 pts)	Excelling (4 pts)
a. Leadership and Policy						
OI.a.01 - Signage ordinances enacted and enforced				X		
OI.a.02 - Ordinances in place to address overgrown lots, abandoned vehicles, unscreened dumpsters, public nuisances, unregulated garage sales, empty storefront windows, etc.					X	
OI.a.03 - Code enforcement/compliance officer on municipal staff and codes are enforced					X	
OI.a.04 - Design style determined, applied, and consistent for site furnishings, crosswalks, gateway entry features, banners, wayfinding signage, etc.				X		
b. Amenities						
OI.b.01 - Site furnishings in place: water features, lamp posts, benches, bicycle racks, drinking fountains, trash and recycling receptacles, containers, planters, and cigarette receptacles				X		
OI.b.02 - Crosswalks well-marked			X			
OI.b.03 - Public restrooms available				X		
OI.b.04 - Effective community gateway entry features				X		
OI.b.05 - Effective use of banners, murals, and/or public art				X		
OI.b.06 - Effective wayfinding signage		X				
OI.b.07 - Effective use of non-plant seasonal decorations (lights, ornaments, etc.)			X			
c. Condition and Maintenance						
OI.c.01 - Condition of structures, buildings, decks, patios, etc related to lack of vandalism, graffiti, peeling or faded paint, and rust					X	
OI.c.02 - Condition of infrastructure: roadways, road shoulders, curbs, medians, sidewalks, railroad crossings, crosswalks/pavement markings, transformers, and utility poles related to lack of weeds, vandalism, litter, graffiti, peeling or faded paint, and rust					X	
OI.c.03 - Condition of signs and site furnishings: water features, lamp posts, benches, bicycle racks, drinking fountains, trash and recycling receptacles, containers, planters, and cigarette receptacles					X	
OI.c.04 - Condition of vacant lots, stormwater retention ponds, and swales				X		
OI.c.05 - Control of excessive stake signs, billboards, and posted flyers					X	
OI.c.06 - Regularly scheduled street sweeping					X	

d. Community Involvement						
Ol.d.01 - Volunteer participation and/or funding of community revitalization and improvement initiatives, such as Adopt-A-Spot, Habitat for Humanity, River Sweep, home repair programs (CHIP), disaster relief, clean-up days, etc.			X			
Ol.d.02 - Process is available for residents to fund public amenities such as memorial benches, brick pathways, etc.				X		
e. Advisors' Discretion: Recognition by the Advisors of an item of special note						
Ol.e.01 - Advisors to enter text below	X	NS	NS	NS		
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percentage	
7. Overall Impression (OI)	76		40		52.63%	

Overall Impression (OI) Recommendations:

One's overall impression of Dyer is that it favors vehicular traffic over pedestrian, bicycle, or any other mode of travel. Historic photos of Route 30 show a main street, of which the road was a part. Today, the road dwarfs the surrounding street, reversing the figure-ground relationship; the main gateway into Dyer on Route 30 says that this is a place to pass through and not linger.

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan addresses the Route 30 corridor and other main intersections in town, acknowledging their need for placemaking. This evaluation is not the place to repeat what is in those plans.



However, until such plans are implemented, *we recommend that the crosswalk striping across Route 30 from east to west at Hart Avenue be repainted to at least match the visibility of the striping across Hart Avenue from north to south.*

Advisors rely on the AIB Community Profile to formulate questions in advance of their site visits. In the criterion "Overall Impression," we were told that, "Dyer In Bloom has been instrumental in acquiring banners free-of-charge to the community in addition to a video."

We request that information provided in the Community Profile contain more

specific information. What do these banners look like? Where and when to they appear? Who is responsible for their care? What is the video about, where may it be seen, and by whom?

In Dyer, the public parks are the principal public gathering spaces. Until the commuter rail project funding creates some human scaled streetscapes, options for public gatherings are limited in Dyer. There are no public libraries except outside the city limits, which may offer non-commercial public space.

Given the vehicular dominance of Dyer, wayfinding signage on main roads like Route 30 directing motorists to the nearest park may be one solution to navigating an otherwise harsh environment.

During our visit we learned that a mural is being considered for the town office building. The location for this mural may be difficult for the public to see. *Consider alternative locations if this project is still in the development stage.*



The shady wall facing Route 30 is the proposed location for the mural, though the trees block the view from motorists. Pedestrians are few.

Evaluation Tour Preparation and Actions (ET) Definition		Metrics Ratings (NS = Not Scored)	
8. EVALUATION TOUR PREPARATION AND ACTIONS (ET): community's readiness prior to and the action during the Evaluation Tour		Not Applicable N/A	Unmet (0 pts) Met (1 pt)
a. Prior to the Evaluation Tour			
ET.a.01 - Community Profile provided to Advisors at least two weeks prior to the first official tour date		X	
ET.a.02 - Community Profile includes contacts with emails			
ET.a.03 - Community Profile from a returning community makes it clear what is new and/or implemented from Advisors' recommendations (scored as N/A for a new community)		X	
ET.a.04 - Evaluation Tour Itinerary and Community Map with boundaries provided to Advisors at least two weeks prior to first office tour date		X	
b. During the Evaluation Tour			
ET.b.01 - Evaluation Tour provided a representative cross-section of the community			X
ET.b.02 - Advisors met with elected/appointed municipal leaders and/or staff			X
ET.b.03 - Advisors met with the business and/or non-profit community		X	
ET.b.04 - Advisors met with the media		X	
ET.b.05 - Advisors met with volunteers			X
ET.b.06 - Advisors were asked to give a presentation(s)		X	
c. Final Wrap-Up			
ET.c.01 - Enough time was allotted for Advisors to work on the Evaluation Tour Report in a quiet place with adequate Wi-Fi availability			X
ET.c.02 - Community participated in a wrap-up session at the end of the Evaluation Tour			X
ET.c.03 - Evaluation Report metrics were adequately addressed in the Community Profile and/or Evaluation Tour Itinerary and during the Evaluation Tour		X	
d. Advisors' Discretion: Recognition by the Advisors of an item of special note			
ET.d.01 - Advisors to enter text below	X	NS	
Totals:	Possible Points	Actual Points	Percentage
8. Evaluation Tour Preparation and Actions (ET)	13.00	5.00	38.46%

Evaluation Tour Preparation and Actions (ET) Recommendations:

In years past, Dyer in Bloom chair and 12-year town council member Mary Tanis led the Community Profile and tour preparation process. The last Community Profile submitted to AIB was in 2019, before the interruption of Covid. This year, personal obligations greatly limited Ms. Tanis' involvement in drafting the Community Profile and in leading the tour. Those who stepped up to fill in were at a clear disadvantage.

The Community Profile was submitted 3 days before the tour, when advisors were visiting another community and time was limited. The document was largely blank, sometimes referencing the 2019 Community Profile (to which advisors had no access and which was 3 years old), and other times, listing the metrics within a criterion with no comment at all. There was no tour agenda, no map, or confirmation on the start time and location, until the last minute. We understand the considerable effort that it takes to prepare a Community Profile.

For next year, we strongly recommend that Dyer in Bloom involves more than two people in the preparation of the Community Profile. It should be given ample preparation time, understanding that communication with municipal officials and non-profit organizations will be necessary in order to completely address the numerous metrics within each AIB criterion. It should be submitted on time, so that advisors' own time and expertise is well-utilized.

Advisors are best able to assist their communities when they have the most complete advance information possible.

Provide links to documents pertaining to the metrics in the report, such as the town Comprehensive Plan, or Main Street design studies. Include major infrastructure plans or developments in the report along with information on floral displays. Understand that the AIB Community Profile is a planning document and tool with great value to your community, if it is utilized to its fullest extent.

Involve members of the media in the AIB site visit. America in Bloom is a wonderful neutral vehicle to advance your town beautification and environmental agenda. You can allow us to say things to the media that help you and carry greater weight because we are "outside" experts. However, we can only offer that assistance if you bring them to the table.

Consider these recommendations as an urge for greater capacity building on the part of Dyer in Bloom. Now that major infrastructure change is at hand, Dyer in Bloom stands to have a great impact on the future of the town, if it chooses to claim a seat at the table.

DISCLAIMERS:

1. Communities are responsible for addressing the metrics in the Community Profile, Evaluation Tour Itinerary, and during the Evaluation Tour. Please note that the metric calculations contained herein are final, and each community is encouraged to focus on any changes during the following year's entry in the America in Bloom National Awards Program.
2. All information is given to the best of America in Bloom's knowledge and is believed to be accurate. Your conditions of use and application of recommendations and/or suggested products are beyond our control. There is no warranty expressed or implied regarding the accuracy of any given data or statements. America in Bloom specifically disclaims any responsibility or liability relating to the use of the recommendations and/or suggested products and shall under no circumstances whatsoever, be liable for any special, incidental or consequential damages which may arise from such use.
3. Reference herein to any specific commercial products, processes, or service by trade named trademark manufacturer or otherwise does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation or favoring by America in Bloom. The views and opinions of authors expressed herein shall not be used for advertising or product endorsement purposes.

2022 Community Recognitions

Community: Dyer, Indiana

Recognized Criterion: Environmental Efforts

After flooding that cost millions and the local hospital shutdown, Dyer is remediating a formerly eroded unstable streambank to provide 14.5 acres of new stormwater storage and native plant habitat in a public park, enhancing public safety and creating an accessible civic amenity through artful stormwater management.

The town of Dyer has seen increased flooding from commercial development of former farmland. Plum Creek flows east toward town across the nearby Illinois border in a channel called Hart Ditch, which has become insufficient to hold stormwater from large storms across this 30 square mile tributary area. Highway closures and hospital evacuations have resulted.

The solution to be completed in fall 2022 creates what is called a 2 Stage Channel: instead of a ditch with a single slope, a vegetated “shelf” is added mid-way up the slope to slow stormwater and give it a greater chance to be absorbed. In the process, excess nutrients are filtered out of the water by native vegetation, and sediment has a chance to settle before making its way downstream. This results in cleaner water downstream as well as reduced flooding.

Noteworthy Project or Initiative: Insert the noteworthy project or initiative here

Dyer’s 2-stage ditch at Hart Ave is a flood control project doubling as a park amenity, funded with private and municipal sources, which stands to improve water quality, while educating the public about green infrastructure.

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