

America in Bloom 2017 EVALUATION REPORT



Community: Morro Bay, California

Population Category: 10,000 – 13,000

Evaluation Dates: May 22-23, 2017

Judges: Linda Cromer and Ed Hooker

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.

All evaluation criteria are adjusted to the climate and environmental conditions of the community’s location.

This Evaluation Report is based upon your community’s efforts in each of the following criteria:

| Criteria | Possible Points | Actual Points |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Floral Displays | 175.00 | 150.00 |
| 2. Landscaped Areas | 175.00 | 158.50 |
| 3. Urban Forestry | 175.00 | 152.00 |
| 4. Environmental Efforts | 175.00 | 159.00 |
| 5. Heritage Preservation | 175.00 | 133.00 |
| 6. Overall Impression | 125.00 | 110.50 |
| Total | 1000 | 863.00 |
| % | 0.86300 | |
| Bloom Rating | 5 Blooms | |

Five blooms = 85% Four blooms = 72.50–84.95% Three blooms = 60.00–72.45% Two blooms = 45.00–59.95% One bloom = <45.00%

Community representatives to receive the Evaluation Report:

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General Observations and Recommendations:

Recommendations are indicated in italics.

Congratulations to Morro Bay for achieving a coveted 5-bloom rating and for winning your population category. Your community is a model of the America in Bloom ethos and we applaud your efforts and your many successes during your four years as a member of the AIB family. We encourage your participation in the international Communities in Bloom challenge, an opportunity you've earned by winning your population category.

The cool ocean climate and central California location along renowned and scenic Hwy 1 make Morro Bay a magnet for tourists and your economy depends on them. Transient occupancy taxes from lodging venues account for 20% of the city's revenue. Thirty-five per cent of local employment is in the hospitality and retail sectors.

With tourism being such a vital part of your economy, it's important that your accommodations are top-notch so visitors will return again and again. Your scenic bay and busy dock provide ready charm and volunteers work hard to enhance and optimize the natural beauty of your ideal location. Morro Bay's public works department coordinates with eleven volunteer groups in its Adopt-A-Park program. Each group has a particular area of concentration. One group, Morro Bay Beautiful, for example, focuses on litter. *We recommend a yearly review of agreements between the city and volunteer groups involved in the Adopt-A-Park program to ensure continued commitment and optimum care in public areas.*

Many of the volunteer groups "cross-pollinate" and the old adage that "if you want to get something done, ask the busiest person you know to do it" is certainly true in Morro Bay.



Morro Bay in Bloom (MBIB) and its army of 'Bloomies' play a pivotal role in the community and its future. MBIB volunteers span every age group and demographic sector that comprise Morro Bay's population. You're built to last, and designed your program to prevent the burn-out that is the death knell of many volunteer groups. Your model of "Beautifying Morro Bay 2 Hours at a Time" is pure genius and is one from which other America in Bloom communities can take a lesson. When folks see that trailer pull up with the MBIB logo on the side and the real and metaphorical tools of change within, they know good things are about to happen and happen fast.

Morro Bay in Bloom President Walter Heath explains that MBIB has a simple premise – "it's a vehicle for people who want to improve their community." Take pride in what you're about and have no doubt that your efforts and accomplishments are a vital economic driver, making Morro Bay a place that residents want to be and a place others want to see.

Thank you for the wonderful hospitality shown us during our visit. We look forward to sharing your successes as part of the America in Bloom family next year and in the years to come.

Linda Cromer and Ed Hooker

1. Floral Displays

| Flower beds, containers, planters, baskets, window boxes, trellises. Arrangement, originality, distribution, location, diversity, balance, harmony, quality of maintenance. Use and integration of annuals, perennials, ornamental grasses, bulbs, tropical plants, and seasonal flowers and colorful foliage that provide year-round interest. | Max points | Actual Score |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Leadership and plan of action for floral displays | 20 | 15 |
| Concept and design, variety of plantings, overall effect | 20 | 15 |
| Maintenance and quality of displays | 20 | 15 |
| Design for all seasons | 15 | 12 |
| Business | | |
| Concept and design, overall effect | 15 | 13.5 |
| Maintenance and quality of displays | 15 | 13.5 |
| Residential | | |
| Concept and design, overall effect | 15 | 14 |
| Maintenance and quality of displays | 15 | 14 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement in design, planting, and maintenance of floral displays | 20 | 19 |
| Financial and in-kind contributions to floral displays | 20 | 19 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 150.00 |

Observations and Recommendations:



Morro Bay has suffered in recent years with the rest of California as a severe drought placed serious restrictions on floral displays. That said, this community knows a thing or two about flower power and has dazzling displays to prove it.

Floral displays along the Embarcadero feature a tapestry of succulents in every iteration. The contrasting forms, variations of color, and oftentimes surprisingly beautiful blooms put on a memorable show. Morro Bay in Bloom has found the key to unlocking the full potential of the displays by

inserting zonal geraniums glowing like neon signs in these show-stoppers in displays that were once native bloomers, and they you introduce them in particularly the downtown resistance to changing a boxes and in front of been fairly successful in with business owners to



like 'Savannah Oh-So-Orange,' the landscape. MBIB is introducing groupings as part of in-ground devoted solely to succulents and are magnificent. We recommend other areas throughout Morro Bay, district. There may be some planting formula in street planter downtown businesses that has past years, but continue working create a demand as well as an

appreciation for the change. Concentrate your efforts in areas that are accessible for volunteers, as the geraniums are bred to bloom and will need regular deadheading. There is no need to use masses of the plants in every locale. Grab attention and establish their importance in one or two high visibility displays and then judiciously insert smaller numbers into other plant groupings. This will spread the color thread throughout the community and create continuity while still maintaining the original creative plant combinations that have been successful in the past.

Assess the success of the geranium introduction, and if you conclude that you will want to expand the program next year, work with local nurseries or other suppliers to make sure you can easily source the plant material. Zonal geraniums are easy to propagate through cuttings, but varieties new to the market are generally protected by patents. If we are to continue to have greater varieties of good performers, we have to respect the costs breeders incur to develop the fabulous colors we all crave.

As part of your Morro Bay in Bloom outreach, organize a plant swap or sale where individuals can acquire (through exchange or purchase) new additions for their gardens. Make the geraniums available for sale in 4-1/2" nursery pots. This will facilitate introduction of the geraniums into private landscapes and magnify the effect of the public plantings. Proceeds of the sale can go to MBIB.



Many business owners in downtown Morro Bay take pride in their storefront container plantings and the secret gardens behind their buildings. Thanks to the many merchants who are also outstanding gardeners willing to share their horticultural successes with us. A unique variety of containers feature succulents in creative combinations and some could do well with a careful elimination of overgrown offshoots. *Ask storeowners to share clippings of these succulents for use in public plantings. Offer to do the quick work of pinching back. You might thank them by offering to include your neon bright geraniums in the public planter nearest to their storefront. Everybody wins!*

Congratulations on the back-to-back rows of osteospermum and lantana we saw newly planted along the split-rail fence at the bike park. It was clever to flip over inexpensive wire baskets to protect the lantana while they were getting established. Lantana are brittle at the crown, and the extra protection until they take off was a great idea. *Leaving the baskets in place will provide continued protection and the plants will grow around and through them, or they can be carefully removed for use in future plantings. Look for opportunities to purchase similar baskets at a discounted price to protect other newly-installed plants in areas with heavy foot traffic. Another idea used by other AIB communities is to cut discarded or extra tomato cages into several cross sections, turning them "legs up" and bending the wires inward to create a protective cover for newly installed plants.*



Morro Bay Golf Course is an outstanding venue. Your first glimpse upon arrival is the bright floral color provided by the Mexican sage in a mixed planting on the street side embankment. In 2014, eighty youngsters worked to install this inviting welcome. *Take a cue from these future Bloomies and incorporate Mexican sage*

in public plantings where it is not yet being utilized. Other long-blooming native perennials to consider include yarrow and hyssop. All are great pollinator plants, drought tolerant and will add an interesting note to public floral displays.

2. Landscaped Areas

| Overall design and suitability of landscape, turf, and ground covers. Use of native and introduced plants. Good use of design principles (i.e., balance of plant material and constructed elements, harmony, color, texture, shape, focal points, etc.). Sustainability. Integration of lighting, hardscapes, and site elements such as lamp posts, water features, drinking fountains, bicycle racks, benches, trash/recycling receptacles, etc. Maintenance (weeds, mulching practices, edging). Site rejuvenation and rehabilitation. Efforts in strategic planning. Community gardens, children’s gardens, healing gardens, pollinator gardens, Backyard Wildlife Habitat, Audubon, and other specialty public gardens and zoos. | Max points | Actual Score |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Overall design and planting of landscape, turf and groundcovers | 15 | 13.5 |
| Environmental management of sports fields and turf | 15 | 14 |
| Quality of landscape maintenance | 15 | 12.5 |
| Sustainable management, naturalization and eco-design | 15 | 14 |
| Business | | |
| Overall design and planting of landscape | 15 | 13.5 |
| Management of turf and groundcovers | 10 | 8.5 |
| Quality of landscape maintenance | 15 | 14 |
| Residential | | |
| Overall design and planting of landscape | 15 | 13.5 |
| Management of turf and groundcovers | 15 | 13 |
| Quality of landscape maintenance | 15 | 13 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement, i.e. garden clubs, neighborhood groups, Master Gardeners and University extension, in funding, planting, and maintenance of landscaped areas | 15 | 14.5 |
| Participation in future planning (committees, councils, and advisory boards.) | 15 | 14.5 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 158.50 |

Observations and Recommendations:

Morro Bay is replete with attractive landscape features in both the public and private sectors in spite of the tremendous challenges posed by the recent years of drought. The community is counting its blessings and enjoying Mother Nature’s softer and damper side, but are wisely continuing to install water-wise landscaping.

The public works department responded to drought conditions by discontinuing irrigation of all ornamental turf in public parks and other areas except for two acres of turf playing fields. Well done.

Reliance on the tourist economy means that visitors have to feel they are in a very special place when they walk your busy streets along the Embarcadero and downtown. City employees are busy keeping the streets clean, graffiti abated, and weeds out of gutters and sidewalks. The work of Morro Bay in Bloom and its army of volunteers is essential to creating and maintaining attractive landscaped areas for visitors and residents to enjoy.



median. *This area can be drought-tolerant shrubs boulders - a scheme that to the expanse. The areas and simply throwing in mulch is unattractive, so fill the void with low-care plants.*

Morro Bay has a number of wonderful parks and most feature nicely landscaped signs. Del Mar Park is a notable exception. *This impressive, well-used park deserves more attention near its entry sign and parking lot. Install low growing grasses or native drought-tolerant plants in the curbed zone near the street in front of the sign. On the other side of the sign, there is a long-mulched area between rows of parking spots facing one another across the curbed dressed up with a staggered installation of native and/or ornamental grasses interspersed with will require little maintenance but will add interest are a maintenance problem if mowing is the option,* A resource for choosing low maintenance drought-tolerant plants for the area is www.calwater.com. Follow the links to drought-resistant plants.

Eye-catching and well-conceived landscape features punctuate the harbor walk. Anchor Memorial Park is kept neat and tidy by Morro Bay Beautiful as a partner with the City of Morro Bay Public Works Department Adopt-A-Park program. The junipers surrounding the small boulder feature, however, are severely over pruned – a result of trying to contain a plant selection destined to outgrow its setting. *The bushes need to be removed and replaced with a dwarf variety. As part of that process, the artificial turf will have to be removed. In this high traffic area, it is perhaps understandable that an artificial surfacing was installed around the monument. When the surface is removed to replace the junipers, consider replacing it with low growing succulents. If you opt instead to re-install artificial turf, there are more attractive and permeable choices on the market.*

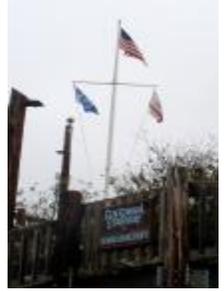


Visit www.easyturf.com. You may want to consider a color other than green. Get creative with a combination of blues to reference the ocean theme in a graphic installation that becomes another piece of public art. See www.greenscape-ltd.com Look at the wall panels inside the library for a design reference.

Centennial Parkway is a gem featuring one of only two permanent large-scale chessboards in the U.S. The park's stairway provides a link between the Embarcadero and Market Street hotels. Bands set up in an area near the public restrooms for weekly concerts. Because of high usage and pedestrian traffic, it has proven impossible to establish turf in this area. However, the high volume of foot traffic does not diminish the need to ensure this area is both functional and well-maintained. *To that end, we suggest installing a pervious surface in the area near the public restrooms where the musicians set up and their main audience congregates. While we are usually quick to consider a horticultural option as a first choice, that isn't practical in this spot (even less so than at Anchor Memorial Park). Again, consider it as an opportunity to install public art with a practical function by choosing a graphic pattern (perhaps a checkerboard pattern in harmony with existing features) in an arresting color combination. A more sedate choice would be to mirror existing colors.*

Adjacent to the Centennial Parkway is a blank concrete retaining wall. Wooden barrels with jade plants are the only softening features along the expanse of concrete. *Consider a project to install a living wall of succulents that could add visual interest to the space while creating a sustainable planting installation.*

The flags at the top of the stairway are faded and tattered. They are an important second tier feature in the total landscape and should be maintained at a high level of excellence.



Several excellent examples of residential and commercial water-wise gardening were observed during the tour. As a community within San Luis Obispo County, Morro Bay has successfully taken advantage of the turf removal rebate system offered to residents. The program compensates residents \$2 per square foot for removing water-reliant turf and replacing with drought tolerant plant material. Bravo!



The Estero Community Garden is a great alternative to home gardening, offering residents who may live in apartments or do not have sufficient space for gardens the opportunity to grow their own produce. The adjacency to the Estero Bay United Methodist Church allows gardening to be incorporated into the learning curriculum of the church's school program. *Consider making the connection between the church grounds and the garden more pronounced, perhaps with an arbor of trailing flowering vines such as mandevilla or bougainvillea.* The rainwater collection system provided by Pacific Heating and Sheet Metal is a great example of public-private partnership, and the signage acknowledging the donation is a great way to highlight donor involvement, and might encourage others to ask, "What can I do to help?"



3. Urban Forestry

| Distribution, variety and suitability of trees; new plantings; urban tree program; qualified personnel or access to trained individual(s); inventory or database; frequency of tree surveys; care and maintenance programs; preservation of heritage trees and woodlots and green buffer zones; scheduled succession plantings, Tree City USA and their Growth Award. Efforts in management, planning, maintenance, improvement, and innovation. Written policies, bylaws and regulations, long- and short-term plans, trees on private property protected. | Max points | Actual Score |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Overall plan of action, tree planting programs, variety of species, inventory | 20 | 18 |
| Tree maintenance | 15 | 13.5 |
| Preservation and restoration of natural areas | 15 | 14 |
| Tree protection/planting regulations and by-laws | 15 | 14 |
| Business | | |
| Overall planting program | 20 | 16 |
| Tree maintenance | 15 | 13 |
| Residential | | |
| Overall planting program | 20 | 15 |
| Tree maintenance | 15 | 12.5 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement in funding, planting, and maintenance of trees (i.e. Tree City USA) | 20 | 18 |
| Volunteer involvement of youth in tree programs (i.e., Arbor Day, etc.) | 20 | 18 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 152.00 |

Observations and Recommendations:

Morro Bay has long demonstrated its commitment to its urban forest. For a period of years, Morro Bay was a designated Tree City USA, but has failed to continue completing the annual application for renewing the designation. That is unfortunate, because being a designated Tree City USA tells residents and visitors that yours is a community dedicated to preserving and enhancing your urban forest. It is a point of pride for communities across the United States. The designation often prioritizes communities applying for grant monies for urban tree care. The official city website notes that as recently as 2014 Morro Bay was a Tree City USA through the National Arbor Day Foundation and in fact displays the Tree City USA logo in a search for “trees” on the site. *We urge you to recommit to showcasing Morro Bay as a Tree City USA.* Many tourists take note of Tree City USA signs or flags and destination tourism is important to Morro Bay.



We commend Morro Bay for the excellent practice of keeping the public informed of policies, studies, ordinances, and minutes of public meetings on your comprehensive website. Your community profile indicates that you have an inventory of trees on public property and that the public works department staff updated an existing urban forestry management plan in 2014. Exploration of your website indicates that is indeed the case. It appears that a comprehensive value-applied inventory was done by Davey Tree Service in 2013. That was an excellent endeavor, but it

is important to keep your tree management plan current, and there is no indication that there has been an effort to track changes in your urban forest since then. *We recommend that if the inventory has not been kept current, the city's public works department designate someone to update and keep it current going forward.* An inventory can quickly become seriously outdated especially considering the climatic challenges California has faced in the last several years. *Review and update the inventory using the software you have on hand at least twice a year, or perhaps quarterly.*

In addition, a well-researched tree management plan, including a great deal of public input, was created in 2014 to prioritize pruning, removals, and potential planting sites on public property. Possibly reacting to the enthusiasm generated by the city's efforts and outreach, fifty volunteers celebrated Morro Bay's 50th anniversary of incorporation by planting fifty Monterey cypress trees as a windbreak for monarch butterflies overwintering in eucalyptus trees at Morro Bay Golf Course.

In 2015, volunteers planted eighteen street trees in the downtown core. Bloomies hand-irrigate 28 recently planted trees weekly using a truck-mounted tank.



The golf course has lost 2000 Monterey pines to a toxic mix of drought, disease, and insect pests in just the past few years. Many are still standing silhouetted like ghosts against the horizon. While the cypress tree planting in 2014 is commendable, particularly since it involved young people, , *consider adopting this effort as a scheduled recurring activity. Work with Josh Heptig, the talented and knowledgeable Superintendent at Morro Bay Golf Course to develop similar initiatives with local elementary and middle school students for Earth Day or Arbor Day. Use the recommended tree list developed as part of the 2014 tree management plan to diversify your*

urban forest.

The software that was included in the 2013 survey makes it fairly simple to calculate the value of your street and park trees still standing. We suspect that using it to identify and quantify the value of trees lost since then would be a demoralizing exercise. *Instead, identify planting sites in your handsome parks including Tidelands and Del Mar and make it a priority to plant at least one tree using right tree/right place principles in each park yearly.* Yesterday is the best time to plant a tree, and we all need to plan for the tomorrows; especially for our children and grandchildren.

The tree inventory included identifying public trees with coded metal tags. *Even someone with limited forestry skills could use the existing inventory to identify mature trees in Del Mar Park, the golf course or other locations where there exists a variety of tree species. Start an arboretum by ground mounting simple labels on*

short rot-resistant posts listing the Latin and common names of trees. Keep the labels well within the mulched zone to facilitate mowing. It's an easy way to make a walk in the park an educational opportunity. As you undertake a diversified planting of street trees downtown, labels should be included next to trees in tree wells.

Nicotiana glauca is one tree you don't want to nurture. It is sprouting up dockside along your harbor walk and should be removed.

Congratulations on your Landmark Tree program. It's a great way for residents to take ownership of their urban forest by nominating trees for inclusion on the list.



The beloved "Jack LaLanne" tree is limited by its location. Ask a certified arborist to evaluate ways to save the tree but limit encroachment into the adjacent parking space.

4. Environmental Efforts

| Sustainability practices. Recycling (paper, glass, metal, plastic, electronics, clothing, etc.), transfer/recycle stations, policies and by-laws, sustainable development strategies, waste reduction, hazardous waste minimization and collection (oil, paint, chemicals, used batteries, etc.), water quality and conservation, energy conservation, environmental cleanup activities, reducing carbon footprint, environmentally friendly transportation, LEED certification, air, noise and light pollution, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), rain gardens and rain barrels, composting, energy efficiency, youth programs, etc. Events such as Earth Day, Recycling Days, Bike to Work Days, etc. | Max Points | Actual Score |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Leadership in environmental initiatives | 25 | 23.5 |
| Effective communication of environmental strategies and initiatives | 25 | 23 |
| New programs, improvement and innovation | 25 | 23.5 |
| Business | | |
| Participation in environmental efforts | 20 | 18 |
| New programs, improvement and innovation | 10 | 8 |
| Residential | | |
| Participation in environmental efforts | 20 | 18.5 |
| New programs, improvement and innovation | 10 | 8.5 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement in environmental efforts | 20 | 19 |
| Youth participation in environmental activities | 20 | 17 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 159.00 |

Observations and Recommendations:



Morro Bay is a state and nationally recognized estuary. The healthy sea otter population that frolics in the harbor is a testament to the success of the community to maintain an environment that can support an abundance of sea life. Public private partnerships between the City Harbor Department, the County and the US Army Corps of Engineers ensure that the bay is maintained to exacting environmental standards. The shoreline and jetties are free of debris, and informational signage along the paths around the harbor encourages the public to be mindful of the impact careless actions can have on the fragile ecosystem. Engaging “Healthy Sea Begins With Me” signage features artwork by school children, and reminds the public of the danger of littering in the harbor and bay. Water quality is high as evidenced by the number of paddle boarders and kayakers taking advantage of the pleasant weather.

The judges were told that the weather experienced during our visit is a typical weather pattern. Mornings were overcast with low cloud cover. The peak of Morro Rock was enshrouded in cloud masses. By mid to late afternoon, the clouds had burned off, and sunshine was in abundance. *As Morro Bay is a big tourist*

destination, perhaps informational signage explaining this weather pattern could be installed along the path around the harbor to educate visitors about how the weather patterns are an integral part of the environmental conditions of the region along the Pacific coastline, and instrumental in maintaining native plant life.

Morro Bay is planning for the future with careful attention to sustainability. The proposed new wastewater treatment plant is planned to open in 2021. Its location across the ridge and out of the view shed along the coastline was well thought out. When the new plant comes online, the existing plant can be removed, and the pristine area along the oceanfront can be redeveloped for a more environmentally sensitive and compatible use. *This would be an excellent opportunity to engage the community in what they envision as a public amenity for the reclaimed site.* While this project met with some opposition, it will be a fantastic addition to the Morro Bay infrastructure. Increased capacity will provide the opportunity for managed growth in both the residential and commercial sectors.

The expansion of bike lanes throughout the community continues to encourage bicycles as alternate means of transportation, reducing the carbon footprint. Painting the bike lanes green reinforces the idea of environmental responsibility, and also increases the sense of security of riders. *Alternative fuel vehicles (electric, natural gas, etc.) should be added to municipal fleets in order to encourage residents to follow suit, a “lead by example” mentality.* The judges observed one electric charging station at the Visitor’s Center. *Electric charging stations should be added strategically throughout the city, and could be incorporated into infrastructure improvement projects.*



Morro Bay’s “Best Idea” for 2017 was the use of large rain barrels at Centennial Parkway combined with drip irrigation used to water planting beds containing succulents and drought-tolerant plants within the park. This is a great example of water-wise gardening. *If not installed already, consider incorporating rain sensors to avoid unnecessary water use or over-watering. Work with the Public Works Department to identify locations around town where sidewalk and street improvements are planned. Make sure to recommend irrigation for current and future planting beds. The interpretive signage installed on the wall of the restroom building explaining rainwater harvesting is a perfect way to educate the public about how simple and “low tech” such a system can be.*

The best management practices currently part of the management of the Morro Bay Golf Course are a model of sustainability for turf management and integrated pest management. The course originally opened in 1923, and at each of the original 9 holes, one can experience the most breathtaking vistas overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Later in the 1950s the Chamber of Commerce added the upper holes. The use of owls to control unwanted insects is an ongoing research project at the Golf Course. Eight owl boxes, each with a pair of nesting owls, ingests over 24,000 insects per year. *This successful practice could be repeated throughout larger municipal parks. It would be an excellent Eagle Scout qualifying project.*

The reforestation of the golf course to provide a Monarch waystation habitat is a great initiative. Recent census of the Monarchs has shown that approximately 20,000 butterflies currently utilize the eucalyptus trees on their migratory journey. *Consider attaining certified Monarch Waystation status. Information can be obtained at <http://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/certify.html>*



The restoration of the wetland habitat along Tidelands Park and the Morro Bay State Park appears to have been a successful environmental remediation project. Morro Bay’s “Adopt- A- Park” Program also appears to be a successful public-private partnership. Tidelands Park has been adopted by the Morro Bay Yacht Club. The boardwalk that winds through the grasses at the State Park allows for the viewing of wildlife in a natural habitat. This is a great outdoor classroom experience for literally busloads of school children, many of whom were visiting the site during our tour. The “Conserve Water” signage on the Morro Bay

welcome sign is a friendly reminder that even in coastal areas water is a precious resource that should be used wisely.



The storm water retention pond incorporated into the naturalized area at The Cloisters Community Park is cleverly disguised as a wetland, and has quickly become home to waterfowl and aquatic species. The boardwalk into the wetland offers visitors the opportunity to become one with the wetland. Well-designed interpretive signage illustrates the historic uses of the site from prehistoric times, to its current configuration as both a park and engineered wetland. Of note is how the ranch, “camp lake” and farm located on the site from 1876 to 1924 created a manmade lake adjacent to the shoreline.

Big Belly trash compactors were observed in use along the Embarcadero. Other locations in town have separate trash and recycling receptacles that are dissimilar in design. *As these receptacles reach the end of their life span, consider replacing with additional Big Belly containers.* Big Belly compactors are solar powered, and can retain up to 5x as much refuse as a normal container. This increased capacity reduces the frequency between pick-ups, the time public works spends emptying the containers, and reduces fuel usage by vehicles required to empty the containers.

Pet waste stations strategically located throughout Morro Bay are donated by citizens. The Mutts for the Bay, part of the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, provides free bags for picking up pet waste and educates the public about keeping the bay clean. The program maintains more than 27 dispensers throughout the watershed in partnership with the City of Morro Bay and a group of dedicated community volunteers. The program is also heavily supported by community and local business donations that provide funds for bags, dispensers, and educational activities.

Mutts for the Bay helps the bay stay clean by keeping pet waste bacteria from washing into the water. The 2014 “State of the Bay” report summarized bay bacteria monitoring from 2008-2012. Bacteria levels at most locations meet water quality standards for recreational contact, although two locations in the back bay exceeded the standard in 25% or less of the samples tested. The connection to water quality is important—picking up after pets is not just about keeping parks and lawns clean; it is also about clean water that all enjoy.



5. Heritage Preservation

| Historical, natural, agricultural, and cultural heritage. Preservation and restoration of buildings, homes, churches, cemeteries; heritage sites and/or monuments; heritage parks, historical gardens; historical trees, artifacts; historical society; heritage advisory committee, museums, archives, history books, land trusts/conservation easements and interpretative programs; ordinances and policies including protection of structures/sites from demolition/development. Resource availability. Farmers markets, festivals and parades. | Max Points | Actual Score |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Municipal | | |
| Leadership in preservation and restoration initiatives | 25 | 15 |
| Legal protection of heritage sites | 25 | 15 |
| Resource availability for preservation and restoration | 25 | 15 |
| Business | | |
| Conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of properties | 15 | 13 |
| Participation in and support of heritage/cultural activities | 15 | 13 |
| Residential | | |
| Conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of properties | 15 | 13 |
| Participation in and support of heritage/cultural activities | 15 | 13 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Volunteer involvement in cultural, historical, and natural heritage activities | 20 | 19 |
| Youth involvement in heritage activities | 20 | 17 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 175.00 | 133.00 |

Observations and Recommendations:

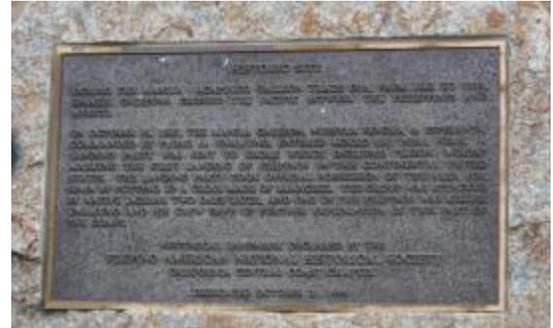


Compared to towns and cities on the East Coast, Morro Bay is a relatively young community. However, like most West Coast communities, the territory that is now Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo County can trace its roots back to prehistoric times. The Chumash and Playano Salinan Indians were the first known inhabitants of the region. Their settlement where Morro Creek meets the Pacific is well documented. The Salinan people still continue to hold ceremonies that honor Morro Rock as a sacred source of power. *Consider partnering with the Salinan people to develop an interpretive*

program for elementary school children to educate them on the traditions and customs of their ancestors.

The arrival of European explorers and missionaries in 1772 began the decline and demise of the native inhabitants. The site of the settlement was later developed in the late 19th century as a working farm and ranch. In 1925, The Cloisters, an upscale Oceanside hotel, was developed on the site.

Morro Bay's strategic location on the Pacific Ocean, combined with the bay that provided a depth adequate to harbor oceangoing vessels, made the community a prime location for the 47th Regimental Coastal Artillery. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the 47th was stationed in Morro Bay to protect oil company interests in the area. During this tumultuous time in world history, the Japanese Navy was carrying out submarine attacks along the Central Coast of California. Today, the site has been developed into a residential community and the Morro Bay Community Park. *Consider placement of a commissioned public art project that pays homage to early inhabitants. An example is the Chumash basket currently being planned for in Arroyo Grande.*



In 1587, Morro Bay was the site of the first landing of the Filipino People on the Continental United States. A bronze plaque mounted on a monumental boulder was presented to Morro Bay by the Filipino American National Historical Society in 1995 and is located along the path that winds around Morro Bay. *Consider relocating the monument to a more prominent location where it will be more visible to the public.*



The Central Coast Maritime Museum is well underway, and the tugboat *Alma* has been returned to her open-air museum along the harbor. The *Alma's* restoration was funded by a generous grant from the Hind Foundation with assistance from the Morro Bay Harbor Festival. The Deep Sea Rescue Vessel (DSRV) *Avalon* has joined the *Alma*. The *Avalon* was designed by the US Navy in response to the loss of the USS *Thresher* so that the Navy would have a way to rescue submarine crews trapped far beneath the ocean surface. A third ship, the *Spindrift*, a rare Monterey-style boat, is awaiting restoration.

The master plan for the Morro Bay Maritime Interpretive Center incorporates the outdoor small craft area where the *Alma*, *Avalon* and *Spindrift* will be on permanent display adjacent to the 1500 square ft. Interpretive Center. The design of the building combined with the outdoor boat exhibits will convey the feeling of a small coastal fishing town and working waterfront. *Consider researching the potential for the Alma to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This designation would bring a heightened attention to the Central Coast Maritime Museum.*

October 2017 marks the 36th year of the Morro Bay Harbor Festival. This much-anticipated annual event provides visitors and residents the opportunity to experience first-hand the Morro Bay commercial fishing fleet. Local owners and operators provide educational sessions on the different kinds of boats, the gear, the industry, and the future of their livelihood. Interactive activities are offered for children of all ages. Programs ranging from what it takes to put fresh seafood on the table, to how to make a commercial fishing net, are presented by locals who for generations have been fishing the coastal waters off Morro Bay. Baiting demonstrations, a fish display, and a touch tank provide hands-on opportunities that work to educate and inform children and adults alike. *Consider an art contest for school*



children that would result in the winning entry being used for next year's advertising for the event.

Residential neighborhoods in Morro Bay date from the 1930s to the present day. The majority of the homes 50 years or older are simple in nature, and could be interpreted as a California variation of Mid-Century Modern. Currently there are no local laws that protect properties from demolition or alterations that could adversely affect the historic nature or character of the structures. As previously stated by past judging teams, continued growth and development pressures are only going to increase, and may result in the loss of important examples of architecture that have for generations been symbols of



the built environment. Becoming a Certified Local Government (CLG) would afford Morro Bay the opportunity to benefit from assistance from the California State Historic Preservation Office and the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC). NAPC assists communities with the development of historic preservation ordinances and the establishment of a functional historic development commission and/or architectural review boards. *Consider moving forward with historic preservation protections. Visit www.nps.gov/clg for additional information. NAPC provides workshops and training for new and established commissions - www.napccommissions.org.*

6. Overall Impression

| | | |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| Lack of litter and graffiti. Maintenance of public open spaces, medians and boulevard strips, streets, sidewalks, walking and biking trails, curbs, ditches, road shoulders, unattended and vacant lots, buildings, garbage/recycling receptacles; lack of weeds, dog waste policies and receptacles, notices/posters appropriately displayed, vandalism not evident. Maintenance of the hardscape: walls, lamp posts, benches, playgrounds, etc. Appropriate use and placement of sculpture, public art, wayfinding signs, graphic elements such as banners, signs and murals. | Max points | Actual Score |
| Municipal | | |
| Overall cleanliness | 10 | 9 |
| Maintenance of public roads and shoulders | 10 | 8.5 |
| Condition of public buildings and properties | 10 | 9 |
| Impact of graphic elements - banners, wayfinding signs, murals, etc. | 10 | 9 |
| Business | | |
| Overall cleanliness | 20 | 18 |
| Condition of buildings and properties | 20 | 18 |
| Residential | | |
| Overall cleanliness | 10 | 8 |
| Condition of buildings and properties | 10 | 8.5 |
| Community Involvement | | |
| Participation in clean-up efforts, adopt-a-spot, annual cleanup days, etc. | 15 | 13.5 |
| Recognition of volunteer efforts | 10 | 9 |
| Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them) | 125.00 | 110.50 |

Observations and Recommendations:

Morro Bay is a clean, attractive community with no evidence of litter – a remarkable fact for a community dependent on tourists and teeming with continual pedestrian traffic. Dog waste policies are in place and there are plenty of convenient waste receptacles.

The only signs of graffiti were tucked away on a single vertical rail on the new bike and pedestrian bridge and near the bottom of a metal fence pole at the tennis courts. The police have no doubt already made quick work of the cleanup with their graffiti wipes.

Most City and organizational websites have volunteer opportunities listed. Public cleanup days are held annually, and eleven different groups volunteer for the public works Adopt-A-Spot effort. Trash receptacles are conveniently located.

There is inconsistency in your waste/recycling containers. *As mentioned previously, we suggest standardizing the more utilitarian efforts with matching Big Belly containers.* The artfully decorated receptacles along the harbor walk, however, are something special. They



are well-executed examples of utile public art and should be preserved and maintained. *Investigate the possibility of pairing these themed works with solid blue containers the same size and shape of the existing receptacles but with the universal recycling logo on top of the blue bins.* The blue of the recycling bins would coordinate with the decorated receptacles. Having the recycling logo on top of the recycling bins would not detract visually from the artwork on the vertical surfaces of the trash bins when viewed by passersby.



Coordinating amenities like benches, trash and recycling receptacles, bike racks, light poles and other site elements lends a sense of order and care to most communities. In Morro Bay, however, you have many benches that serve a dual purpose as public art. The rugged-appearing memorial bench in downtown Morro Bay has something to say about the sensibilities of the Degroit sisters and their rock-solid unwavering commitment to family. The surfboard bench in front of Forever Stoked Gallery is festive and fitting. Handsome benches shaped like deck cleats provide a subtle maritime reference in Anchor Memorial Park and suit the locale beautifully, as does the low fence made of welded anchor chain. A series of thirty massive concrete benches huddle singly and in groups of three along the waterfront near Morro Rock, like ancient forms worn smooth by time and tides, bleached by the sun, and in perfect sync with their surroundings. The



Liars Bench outside the Harbor Master's office tells its own fish tale. And the respect of rugged men of the sea for their deceased mechanic friend is fittingly memorialized by the bronze truck seat/tool assemblage dockside. All of these seemingly disparate elements comprise a unique sensibility, a sense of community, and are the types of elements that make for livable, lovable cities as described by author and lecturer Peter Kageyama. *Create a self-guided walking tour map or brochure of the benches with a short narrative about each installation.* You are "sitting" on something very special in Morro Bay.

Plan Morro Bay is a 2- year exercise which is inviting residents to participate in planning the future of their community. The plan is focusing on updating the city's general local/coastal plan as well as a Downtown Waterfront Strategic Plan. The addition of a convention center and hotel to the downtown has been identified as a priority and should greatly increase tourism. The requirement that new development incorporate coastal access for the public, public restrooms, recycling containers, interpretive signage and public art installations is a testament to the high quality of life afforded by the community. *Encourage the inclusion of additional murals in new development to add to the very successful program already in place.*



Many special initiatives and locales in Morro Bay have included attractive interpretive signage, but there appears to be a lack of coordination or continuity of design. Wayfinding and interpretive signage is one element that is universally more effective if cohesive. *We recommend that you make an inventory all interpretive and wayfinding signage in Morro Bay. Take photos and create an assemblage so that you can see the ‘big picture’ and design a style that adequately represents the many amenities your community has to offer, ensuring that you strike a balance with existing signage.* As funds become available and you add additional wayfinding signs, you will have an attractive model in hand. You have somewhat of a challenge in tying the three areas of Morro Bay (downtown, the Embarcadero, and North Morro Bay) together, and cohesive wayfinding signage will help.

Commercial properties are, for the most part, well-maintained. Proximity to the ocean, however creates certain challenges. Businesses rely on signs to invite patronage and impart information to potential customers.



Oftentimes, they're too busy making a living to take note of signs that need painting and/or repair. *The Bloomies spend time circulating throughout the community, so make it a point to note problems that might have been overlooked and give business owners a friendly heads-up.*

Residential areas appeared bright and clean. Pride of place radiates from the bluffs with ocean vistas, to developments from the 60s and 70s, and more modest neighborhoods throughout Morro Bay. Facades are painted, blight removed, and landscapes are cared for.



Residents and visitors make the most of this wonderful community with festivals and events including the Avocado and Margarita Festival, the Kite Festival, the Dixon Spaghetti Feed Dinner, the Harbor Festival – and the list goes on and on. Morro Bay knows how to enjoy itself and you've helped create a venue designed for fun.

Hats off to Morro Bay in Bloom! Volunteer efforts drive progress and improvement in Morro Bay, and the Bloomies are behind the wheel.

Checklist:

| Yes | No | N/A | |
|-----|----|-----|--|
| x | | | Were the judges given a Community Profile, Evaluation Tour Itinerary, and map prior to their arrival? |
| x | | | Did the Evaluation Tour Itinerary provide for experiencing a representative cross-section of the community? |
| x | | | Were the guides knowledgeable about the community and horticultural aspects? |
| x | | | Were the judges able to modify the schedule if needed? |
| | x | | Did the judges meet with the media? |
| x | | | Did the judges meet with municipal leaders? |
| | x | | Were the judges asked to give presentations? |
| x | | | Were the judges able to meet with and talk to volunteers? |
| x | | | Was enough time allotted to complete the Evaluation Report in a quiet place? |
| x | | | Were you informed about pollinator gardens? How many? (Please use comments section to add details if necessary.) |
| x | | | Was there a wrap-up session at the end of the tour? |

DEFINITIONS (determined by who owns and/or manages the property):

Municipal - city hall and other municipal properties, parks and open spaces, roads, roadsides, sidewalks, public cemeteries, public schools/universities/colleges, sports facilities, empty lots and brownfields, libraries, hospitals, public railway and bus stations

Business - commercial and industrial sectors, shopping centers, stores, office buildings, restaurants, mixed use developments, service stations, private railway and bus stations, plant nurseries, garden centers, assisted living/nursing home/graduated care facilities, apartment buildings, hotels, private hospitals, churches, not for profit/civic organizations, private cemeteries, private schools/universities/colleges, residential common areas managed by associations

Residential - single family residences, town houses, individual homes in planned/gated/manufactured home communities, residential neighborhoods or developments

Community Involvement - volunteer efforts by individuals, clubs, youth groups, church groups, civic organizations, volunteer municipal boards, and social clubs for community enhancement

DISCLAIMER:

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2017 Community Recognitions

Community: Morro Bay, California

Recognized Criterion: Community Involvement

Morro Bay in Bloom is a catalyst for positive change in Morro Bay, California. This committed group of volunteers is ever ready to serve their quaint coastal community perfectly situated in central California. With scenic Highway 1 as a main thoroughfare through the city, the volunteers of Morro Bay in Bloom are giving tourists every reason to stop and residents every reason to stay.

Bloomies know how to get things done. They've adopted a winning motto: "Beautifying Morro Bay 2 Hours at a Time!" This credo is a recipe for success and they've cooked up a menu of public improvements including bountiful servings of succulents and drought tolerant perennials spiced with jolts of color from neon bright geraniums. They've planted trees for their grandchildren to relax under and helped develop recreational venues for the community's young and young at heart.

When the MBIB trailer pulls up, tools start spilling out and hands get busy. The pursuit is more than planting flowers to beautify the community, MBIB focuses on the environment and sustainability of the community's landscapes and neighborhoods, preserving a unique culture and proud heritage and providing lasting benefits for the future of Morro Bay.

Two hours at a time.

Noteworthy Project or Initiative: The Morro Bay Bike Park

Morro Bay's Bike Park is the only sanctioned bike park in the county. A community project located on a hillside with a backdrop of blue skies, the park is the result of a 2-year planning effort along with the hard-work and dedication of dozens of volunteers.

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