

America in Bloom 2026 Evaluation Report

Community: Cottage City, Maryland
Evaluation Dates: June 24-26



Lead Advisor: Carrie Sears
Co-Advisor: Bruce Riggs

America in Bloom (AIB) promotes and builds vibrant and sustainable communities through volunteerism and education emphasizing flowers, plants, trees, heritage, and environmental and lifestyle enhancements. America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as the best examples of welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play.

Evaluation Areas	Possible Points	Actual Points	Percent
Community Vitality	104.00	50.00	48.07%
Floral Impact	80.00	6.00	7.50%
Landscaped Areas	80.00	9.00	11.25%
Urban Forestry	96.00	64.00	66.66%
Environmental Initiatives	104.00	48.00	46.15%
Celebrating Heritage	96.00	24.00	25.00%
Overall Impression	96.00	49.00	51.04%
Community Involvement	104.00	18.00	17.30%
Evaluation Tour Preparation and Actions	14.00	11.00	78.57%
Total Points and Percent	774.00	279.00	36.04%
Star Rating	4		

Star ratings are based on overall percentage.

1 star = 0% - 9.99%

2 stars = 10% - 19.99%

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		
Name	Title	Email
Wanda Wheatley	Commissioner Ward 3	Ward3@cottagecitymd.gov
John Hoatson	Town Manager	townmanager@cottagecitymd.gov
John Brooks	At-Large Commission	atlarge@cottagecitymd.gov
Denise Hamler	Green Team/Community Garden	denisehamler@gmail.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. 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 points): programs or procedures are not in place.

In Progress (1-2 points): programs or procedures are developed, and a plan of action is implemented.

In Place (3-5 points): programs or procedures are utilized and beneficial.

Surpassing (6-8 points): programs or procedures are exceptional, utilized, and beneficial throughout the community.

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 eight 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):

Cottage City, Maryland — Community Data Sheet

Location: Prince George’s County, Maryland, just northeast of Washington, D.C.

Area: 0.27 sq. mi. (0.65 km²)

Incorporated: 1924

Population: ~1,300 (2026 est. 1,318) **Population Density:** ~4,800 residents per sq. mi.

Geography & Character

- Situated along the Anacostia River corridor
- Low-lying terrain (~30 ft. elevation)
- Flat to gently sloping landscape
- Tree-lined residential streets in a compact urban setting
- Adjacent to Eastern Avenue, Bladensburg Road, and the CSX rail corridor

Economy

- Workforce employed primarily in service, administrative, professional, and technical occupations
- Strong commuter connection to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area
- Growing remote-work participation (~11%)
- Median Household Income: ~\$80,800
- Per Capita Income: ~\$48,900

Education

- Served by Prince George’s County Public Schools
- Convenient access to regional higher education institutions, including University of Maryland, College Park

Historic & Cultural Highlights

- Near the historic **Battle of Bladensburg** site from the War of 1812
- Home to the historic **Bladensburg Dueling Grounds**
- Part of the regional **Port Towns** revitalization initiative
- Access to Anacostia River recreation and restoration projects

Interesting Facts

- Served as a hospital and artillery position during the War of 1812
- Named for its early cottage-style homes built for working families and veterans
- Once a summer retreat of Ulysses S. Grant
- Associated with events that inspired *The Exorcist* (3807 40th Ave)
- Home of *The Landlord's Game* (1904), precursor to *Monopoly*, created by progressive writer and inventor Elizabeth Magie
- Known today as a diverse and close-knit community

Community Snapshot

Cottage City combines rich history, small-town character, and proximity to Washington, D.C. Its heritage, riverfront location, and participation in regional revitalization efforts make it a distinctive community focused on preserving its past while enhancing quality of life for residents.

– ChatGPT generated

community data sheet. June 2026

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of America in Bloom, thank you for participating in America in Bloom this year. America in Bloom is about much more than flowers. It celebrates collaboration, civic pride, environmental stewardship, heritage, and the people who work together to create a vibrant community. We are grateful for the time, energy, and

commitment of every employee, resident, and business owner. Together, you demonstrate that a small community can accomplish great things when residents work toward a common goal.

The recommendations in this report are intended to serve as a menu of opportunities rather than a rigid checklist. Cottage City can adopt those initiatives that best align with its vision, priorities, and available resources. Some projects can be implemented quickly, producing visible improvements and an immediate sense of accomplishment. Others will require careful planning, partnerships, and a sustained investment of funds and time. These projects are best incorporated into a long-term strategic plan and addressed by a local coalition of residents, a municipal board, task force, or ad hoc group united around a shared interest. The Cottage City Green Team is an example.

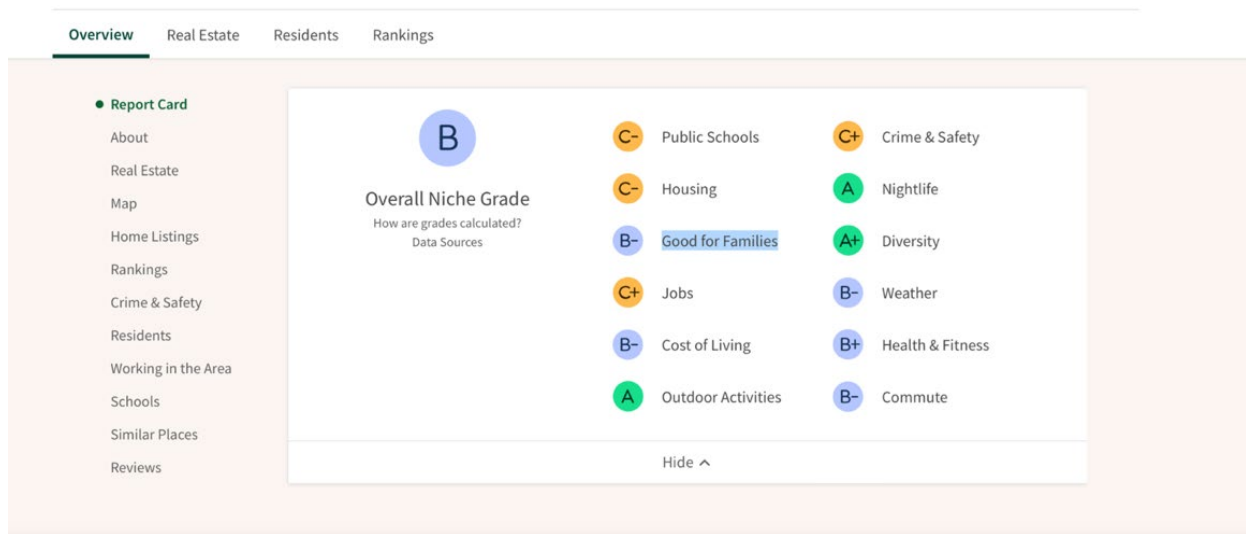
Achieving meaningful and lasting community improvement requires balance. As priorities are established, the Town should consider the resources available—including volunteer capacity, staff time, technical expertise, and funding. Balance short-term successes with long-term investments to maintain public interest while steadily working toward a broader vision. Lasting transformation is accomplished one thoughtful step at a time. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither are thriving, beautiful, and resilient communities.

The following report includes observations and recommendations in eight areas of impact. Recommendations are italicized for easy reference. In addition to the eight areas, three major influences shape most communities today: social media, population changes, and climate impacts. What follows is a brief look at these influences and Cottage City.

Social Media

We begin with what we learn from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: **Cottage City**, officially the **Town of Cottage City**, is a town in [Prince George's County, Maryland](#), United States. Per the [2020 census](#), the population was 1,335. Cottage City is a small, quiet community lying between [Eastern Avenue](#) (the border with [Washington](#), DC), [Brentwood](#), [Colmar Manor](#), and the [Anacostia River](#). Cottage City was developed, beginning in 1870, under the name of "The Highlands". The area was incorporated in 1924 as Cottage City.

A small, ethnically mixed community with old cottage-style homes along tree-lined streets, Cottage City is an active and enthusiastic partner with the county in the Port Towns Redevelopment Plan, an effort to revitalize the neighborhoods while preserving their historic heritages. The goals of this effort are an improved environment and an improved quality of life for its citizens. **Source:** Wikipedia, "Cottage City, Maryland," accessed June 2026. As already demonstrated, it is easier than ever for people to form an opinion of a community before actually visiting it. In addition to ChatGPT and Wikipedia, two websites were searched. *Niche* is a website and platform that helps students and families find and enroll in the right school, college, or neighborhood. It provides in-depth profiles, reviews, and ratings for K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and cities and towns across the US. *Niche* also offers tools for personalized search and organization, as well as rankings for different aspects of the school and college experience. Below is a screen shot of a 'report card' for the town by *Niche* (4/22/2026)



Nextdoor is a neighborhood social networking app that connects residents, businesses, and public agencies within specific geographic areas. It allows users to share information, discuss local issues, and connect with their neighbors, fostering a sense of community. The top reasons Nextdoor Neighbors love Brentwood-Cottage City are community, dog-friendly, food, parks, quiet, sidewalks, trails, trees, walking, and woods.

Since a few negative comments can be harmful, monitor social networking forums for comments about the community and encourage residents to post comments about their hometown experiences.

Population Change According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. fertility rate has been falling over the past decade, to about 1.6 births per woman in 2023. The population of Cottage City, on the other hand, has grown steadily since 2010. To maintain the population, Cottage City may need to *appeal to both younger and older generations*. By highlighting its reputation as a diverse, welcoming, safe community, Cottage City may continue to draw people of different ages, ethnicities, races, religions, etc.

Climate Impacts The District of Columbia and surrounding area face severe climate risks, primarily extreme heat, flooding, and sea-level rise. By 2050, the area expects three times more heat emergencies (>95°F) and 11 inches of sea-level rise, threatening infrastructure, transit, and public health, especially in vulnerable communities, as highlighted in [Climate Ready DC's storymaps on lived experiences](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b96b4c45155a4c81bc7ff9670de3b42b) (<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b96b4c45155a4c81bc7ff9670de3b42b>).

Review both the 2025 and 2026 recommendations for those not started as well as those that are easy to do. Start to build a 'base layer' of points in those areas identified as not started.

As you have done with trees, choose an area to target and concentrate your efforts. Prioritize carefully and tap different people for a leader and team. Establish a budget. Each team should identify tasks and establish a timeline.

Identify potential grants, fundraisers, and/or donors. Possible resources might be [Grantstation.com](https://www.grantstation.com) and [philanthropy.com](https://www.philanthropy.com). You might also consider hiring a grant writer.

Track your progress, so it is easier to document in the next profile, inform potential donors, and complete grant applications. A year-end summary or annual report works well.

COMMUNITY VITALITY: Community Vitality refers to the overall health, strength, and vibrancy of a community, reflected in the quality of life, social connections, economic opportunities, and civic engagement among its members and measured through policies, programs, activities, and facilities. Examples include neighborhood associations that are active, thriving local businesses, inclusive public events, volunteer programs, and accessible services like libraries and recreation centers. Museums, arts/cultural organizations, mentoring programs, schools, faith-based organizations, parks, playgrounds, dog parks, sports fields, water activities, trails, golf courses, and other active and passive recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities all add to the vitality of a community.	Not Applicable (N/A)	Not Started (N/S) 0	In Progress 1-2	In Place 3-5	Surpasses 6-8
1. An economic development plan is in place and implemented. It includes strategies for short- and long-term economic growth along with programs to improve the economy. It is regularly evaluated, measured, and/or reevaluated.					6
2. Communication of ordinances and policies pertaining to Community Vitality is easily accessible. Topics include, but are not limited to, culture, education, government, recreation, and technology. Examples of communication avenues include, but are not limited to, lectures, print, city website, city hall, library, and social media.				5	
3. Master plan exists for current and/or future community growth and public green space. Growth, enhancements, and/or protection of undeveloped areas are included. It is reviewed and routinely updated.			1		
4. Public parks and/or green spaces are available. Properties may be defined as pocket parks, school grounds, neighborhood, city, county, state, and national parks, and green spaces. Parks and green spaces meet the needs of the community and are clean, maintained, and utilized.					6
5. Active and/or passive recreation opportunities are available and meet the needs of the community. Examples include, but are not limited to, water sports, golf, baseball, pickleball, skiing, soccer, hiking, nature trails, bird watching, picnic areas, and fishing. Year-round age and ability appropriate programs are available.				5	
6. Seating is available near walking, exercise, playground areas, and/or public transportation stops. The seating and area are clean and accessible.				4	
7. Shade is provided for participants and/or spectators at cultural and sporting events. Structures include, but are not limited to, shade sails, dugouts, pergolas, arbors, and trees. Structures are maintained and inspected for safety.				5	

8. Community gathering space is available. The space is accessible and used throughout the year for all ages and abilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, community center, senior center, YMCA, faith-based gathering places, libraries, town hall, and designated outdoor refreshment areas (DORA) with clearly defined district boundaries.				4	
9. Age- and ability-appropriate play areas are accessible. Equipment is ADA-compliant and/or inspected by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector.				4	
10. Active outdoor community events are offered throughout the year. Examples include, but are not limited to, Bike-to-Work Day, Walk to School Day, and 5K events.				3	
11. Community celebrations and/or cultural performances meet the needs of the community. Examples include, but are not limited to, festivals, art, dance, theatre, music, and cinema.				3	
12. Alternative transportation programs are available. Transportation is available in all areas of the community. Examples include, but are not limited to, bicycle/scooter rental, car/van pools, public transportation, and/or ride sharing to all areas of the community.				3	
13. Safety policies, programs, and/or services are in place. Examples include, but are not limited to, police, fire, emergency medical services, community health, crime prevention, homeland security, gang prevention, traffic, homelessness, and civil and human rights. Information is easily accessible and communicated.			1		
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percent
Community Vitality	104		50		48.07%

Community Vitality Recommendations:

Community vitality is about individual and collective wellbeing, encompassing economic strength, social cohesion, and public safety. Wise economic development includes short-term and long-term planning for retention of historic structures and creation or enhancement of green space. People working and playing together generate social cohesion. Ultimately, community vitality reduces the need for police by proactively promoting wellbeing.

See <https://www.justicehappenshere.yale.edu/about>

<https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crimes-prevention>

Blight along Bladensburg Road Commercial Corridor: Abandoned buildings, overgrown vacant lots, and derelict storefronts harm a community by dragging down property values, fueling crime rates, and increasing the strain on public services. For Cottage City, the challenge is not simply removing blight—it is creating a commercial corridor that serves residents, strengthens the tax base, and improves quality of life. A successful strategy would combine code enforcement, redevelopment incentives, beautification, targeted business recruitment, and evolution. The project will take many years to plan, execute, and complete. Clearly, recommendations for this project are beyond the scope of the American in Bloom program. Here are, however, some considerations:

With one side of the road in Colmar Manor and the other in Cottage City, coordination between the two municipalities is critical to any planning and long-term success. *Utilize available resources such as the U of MD Partnership for Action Learning or the Neighborhood Design Center and launch a "Bladensburg Road Revitalization Initiative."*

Priorities: After each community defines its goals, Cottage City and Colmar Manor should define a shared transformational goal; complete a property utilization & occupancy audit; develop a corridor master plan; adopt design standards; begin streetscape improvements; recruit one or two destination businesses; secure redevelopment funding and grants.

For both communities, the goal for Bladensburg Road would probably be a mixed-use community main street—a place where residents can shop, dine, access services, meet neighbors, and take pride in the appearance of their towns. This transformation would improve economic vitality while creating a stronger sense of place and community identity. Here are some considerations:

1. **Strengthen Code Enforcement and Property Compliance:** Determine each towns' responsibilities and those of Prince George's County; determine and address differences in Cottage City and Colmar Manor's codes; if appropriate, conduct a comprehensive audit of use & occupancy compliance for all businesses; if appropriate, request the county reinforce zoning regulations; establish a phased compliance program with clear deadlines; increase inspections for encroachments onto state and municipal roads, environmental hazards, stormwater runoff, outdoor storage, and abandoned vehicles; enforce screening requirements for vehicle storage, repair yards, and industrial uses; enforce handling of potential hazardous material; adopt a vacant property registration ordinance; and create escalating penalties for repeat violators.

2. **Develop a Corridor Redevelopment Vision:** Create a long-term plan for transforming Bladensburg Road from an auto-oriented strip into a mixed-use community corridor. A potential vision might be for a "Main Street Gateway" or entry point and revitalized corridor meant to draw people into Cottage City. Plan to feature a community-serving grocery store and retail shops, restaurants and cafés, small professional offices, community gathering spaces, mixed-use buildings with housing above shops, and, of course, attractive floral displays, landscaping, and streetscape improvements.

3. Coordinate with both communities to identify and recruit businesses that residents actually need: conduct a market analysis to identify gaps in local services. Possible targets may include grocery store, food and dining establishments (family restaurant, coffee shop, bakery, ice cream parlor, ethnic restaurants reflecting community demographics); daily needs (pharmacy, small specialty market, hardware store, dry cleaner, pet services); health and wellness (medical offices, dental offices, physical therapy, fitness studio); and community services (childcare center, senior services, co-working space, financial services)
4. Redevelop the Industrial Park: The blighted industrial park may present one of the greatest opportunities. *Have an engineer determine the safety and liability of the existing parking structure to assess its current condition and future value.* Short-Term: improve security and maintenance; market vacant spaces aggressively; remove debris and improve signage. Long-Term: consider transforming portions into small business incubators, artisan and maker spaces, light manufacturing, innovation and green technology businesses, and flexible commercial spaces. A public-private redevelopment partnership may be needed.
5. Large Storage Facilities: Storage facilities contribute little street activity. Where feasible, improve landscaping and architectural screening, add public art on blank walls, encourage redevelopment of underutilized parcels into mixed-use projects, and require enhanced streetscape standards for future expansions.
6. Improve Walkability and Streetscape: The corridor should feel safe and attractive for pedestrians. Consider potential improvements: wider sidewalks, street trees, decorative lighting, benches, trash and recycling receptacles, public art, wayfinding signage, safe pedestrian crossings, bicycle infrastructure.
7. Create a Green Corridor Initiative: Given proximity to the Anacostia watershed, environmental improvements could become a community identity. Projects might include native landscaping and pollinator gardens. rain gardens, tree canopy expansion, green stormwater infrastructure, electric vehicle charging stations.
8. Encourage Mixed-Use Development: Over time, rezone selected properties to allow ground-floor retail, upper-floor apartments, live-work units and townhomes adjacent to commercial areas.
9. Create a Gateway District: As a primary entrance to Cottage City, an improved Bladensburg Road would communicate community pride. Gateway features could include decorative entrance signs, landscaping, public art celebrating local history, seasonal flower displays, banners (as *recommended previously by America In Bloom advisors*) and lighting. *Refer to the section Celebrating your Heritage for possible short-term and long-term suggestions for the Bladensburg Road.*
10. Investigate the possibility of the addition of a commuter train station at Cottage City. Learn about the process and how much time is required, etc. *If appropriate, consider initiating a request for a traffic study through the state's [Neighborhood Traffic Issues Program](https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/public-works-transportation/report-public-works-problem/neighborhood-traffic-issues) <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/public-works-transportation/report-public-works-problem/neighborhood-traffic-issues>.*
11. *Attracting artists to a blighted neighborhood is a common strategy.* Key actions that have enabled other communities to succeed in attracting artists are offering affordable space, creative freedom, and low-barrier infrastructure.

Secure Affordable Live-Work Spaces

- Establish Artist Lofts: Convert vacant warehouses, old schools, or empty storefronts into low-rent live-work spaces.

- Offer Rent Subsidies: Partner with local landlords to offer deeply discounted rent for the first 12–24 months.
- Utilize Land Banks: Work with city land banks to acquire tax-delinquent properties and transfer them to artists cheaply.

Legalize and Streamline Permitting

- Create Arts Zoning Districts: Change local zoning laws to allow mixed-use commercial and residential properties by right.
- Simplify Event Permits: Eliminate bureaucratic hurdles for pop-up galleries, street festivals, and open-air markets.
- Legalize Public Murals: Create a streamlined "mural registry" that allows artists to paint designated walls without fines.

Provide Funding and Financial Incentives

- Launch Micro-Grants: Offer small, fast-tracked grants (\$500–\$2,500) for public art installations or community workshops.
- Designate Enterprise Zones: Form state-certified Arts and Entertainment Districts to offer artists state income tax waivers.
- Fund Property Renovations: Provide "sweat equity" programs where artists get property ownership in exchange for fixing blighted structures.

Build Community Infrastructure

- Open Tool Libraries: Create a shared maker space stocked with expensive equipment like kilns, woodshops, and 3D printers. *The proposed visitor center at the corner of Bladensburg Road and 38th Ave might also house an Open Tool Library.*
- Establish Anchor Spaces: Open one centralized, reliable community coffee shop, brewery, or community garden to serve as a social hub.
- Host regular events: Create recurring monthly events that bring outside buyers directly to the neighborhood.



Building at Bladensburg Rd and 38th Ave, proposed visitors center

CSX Railroad: The possibility of adding a commuter stop along the CSX line was previously mentioned in item 10. The CSX rail also runs through a neighborhood approximately 24 to 30 times per day, with the backyards of 28 homes bordering the railroad property. Concerns about the management practices of the railroad property have been raised. In addition, CSX Corporation is legally obligated to transport hazardous materials under federal law. The transport of hazardous or toxic materials through a residential area presents potential safety concerns, including the risk of derailments and a hazardous or toxic materials spill. These two situations are a good example of the potential benefits of forming a local coalition of residents around a shared interest.

The following advice for homeowners near a CSX rail line is the result of an AI query: For immediate safety and hazard mitigation, contact the CSX emergency dispatch line at 1-800-232-0144 or the 24/7 CSX Ethics Helpline at 1-800-737-1663. Reach out to your local municipality and county emergency management agencies to ensure that they have a localized hazardous materials contingency plan in place. Living with railroad property bordering your backyard introduces specific challenges. *Consider the following steps to proactively address these concerns:*

- *Establish a Neighborhood Coalition:* Coordinate with the 28 affected homeowners. A united neighborhood association holds significantly more leverage with local zoning boards, elected officials, and CSX representatives than individual residents.
- *Review Emergency Readiness:* CSX partners with first responders to supply the [CSX Community Emergency Responder Training and Education](#). Confirm with your local fire and police departments that they are actively utilizing these resources.
- *Track Hazardous Shipments:* Federal regulations mandate that railroads provide certain hazardous materials flow reports. You can review the [CSX Hazardous Materials Data](#) or contact them at HazMatSafety@CSX.com to understand the specific classes of cargo being moved through the College City corridor.
- *Advocate for Protective Infrastructure:* Engage your city or county representatives to petition for physical improvements, such as enhanced fencing along the railroad property, noise barriers, or vegetative buffers.
- *Learn about land management practices of CSX.*

FLORAL IMPACT: Floral areas in a community are designated spaces where flowers are strategically and intentionally planted, cultivated, and maintained to enhance the beauty and ecological health of the environment. These areas can be part of public parks, street medians, residential gardens, school grounds, roadways, or commercial zones. Examples include containers, hanging baskets, window boxes, raised planters, trellises, and in-ground plantings and can be found at Botanical Gardens, school gardens, public spaces, and business and residential front yards. Season-round displays can utilize annuals, perennials, bulbs, tropical plants, flowering topiaries, colorful foliage, and cultivated and native plants.	Not Applicable (N/A)	Not Started (N/S) 0	In Progress 1-2	In Place 3-5	Surpasses 6-8
1. Floral combinations are carefully selected for location and environmental conditions. The combinations create visual interest, provide dramatic effects, and appear coordinated.			1		
2. Floral displays are located throughout the community. Displays are well maintained and attractive. Examples include, but are not limited to, flowerbeds, raised beds, planters, hanging baskets, window boxes, carpet bedding, topiaries, and/or mosaics.		N/S			
3. In-ground flower displays are designed with mature plant heights, color, and texture in mind. Plants are healthy, robust, and floriferous.			1		
4. Containers and/or hanging baskets are part of a floral plan, in use, scaled to their surroundings, and have suitable plants. Flowers are robust, floriferous, and provide a dramatic effect.			1		
5. Regular maintenance, watering, fertilizing, pruning, deadheading, weeding, removal, and/or replacement of dead flowers is conducted on public properties.			1		
6. Demonstration/display gardens are available. Flowers are labeled. The garden is promoted to the public. Garden is available to residents and businesses for events.			1		
7. Appropriate floral maintenance procedures, including fertilization (chemical and/or non-chemical) for municipal, parks, and/or school properties are implemented. The procedures produce effective results. Educational information about fertilization is communicated. Examples of communication avenues include, but are not limited to, lectures, print, city website, city hall postings, libraries, and social media.		N/S			
8. Training programs for proper floral displays care and maintenance are offered to seasonal staff and/or volunteers. Training is conducted by Master Gardeners, County Extension, local garden centers, state agencies, and/or contractors.		N/S			

9. Efforts are in place to educate and raise public awareness of the importance of floral displays in the landscape. Educational information about the selection and care of flowers for beautification is available and communicated to the public.			1		
10. Recognition programs are in place monthly, quarterly, and/or annually for attractive displays created by businesses and/or residents.		N/S			
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percent
Floral Impact	80		6		7.50%

Floral Impact Recommendations:



Town Hall plantings are a great start to demonstrate how flowers can enhance a community. Your plant selections seemed appropriate and appeared to be thriving. It was obvious that they had just been installed but still have a positive impact. Everyone who visits the Town Hall notices that you care about making things better. The property is an inspiration to your community and hopefully will inspire your residents to do a similar planting at their abode. We did not notice any garden centers or nurseries in your community and commend you on finding a source for your plantings.

The Community Garden is well-established and the center of workshop activities and events as well as gardening. The brochure for the garden documents fifteen years of work. Honeybees at the Community Garden enhance the pollination of various food and flower crops both at the Garden and in the neighborhood as the bees search for nectar. Three hives produce a plethora of sweet ambrosia, and the beekeepers tend their bees by providing hives and supers to allow for the harvest of hundreds of

pounds of honey. Donations made for a jar of Cottage City honey supports the Community Garden. Proceeds of \$1800 have been used to purchase rain catchments, which fill the two large cisterns and add new raised beds for growing.

Consider working with an area nursery to pre-order plants for installation in early spring so that they can mature throughout the growing season. Another plant source could be Home Depot, Lowe's, or a similar business. Approach them nicely, and they may even donate them to your community. Tell them that you will advertise where the plants were obtained, and they may give you a price break or a donation. Consider involving your community garden people to act as coordinators for ordering floral plants. Go beyond in-ground plantings and try to expand the palette into hanging baskets and shrubbery that flower throughout the summer, such as roses. Keep track of what does well and then next year focus on that plant. Another way to get more floral impact is to have a plant exchange with your community members. Advertise this in your community newsletter.

Another suggestion is to designate a person to water the plants. This individual's responsibilities would be to water the plants, groom them, and fertilize as needed. Some sort of water wagon will be needed.

LANDSCAPED AREAS: Landscaped areas in a community include outdoor spaces intentionally designed and maintained to enhance natural beauty, functionality, and environmental health. These areas include elements like non-native and native trees, shrubs, ornamental grasses, vines, succulents, edibles, evergreens, topiaries, turf, groundcovers, and pollinator-friendly plants, and can include hardscape features such as benches, fountains, and decorative features. Landscaping can be found in parks, walking paths, residential neighborhoods, community gardens, roundabouts, streetscapes, commercial zones, schools, and public squares.	Not Applicable (N/A)	Not Started (N/S) 0	In Progress 1-2	In Place 3-5	Surpasses 6-8
1. Action plan developed and implemented for proper maintenance, pruning, removal, and/or replacement of dead and overgrown plants. Best practices are utilized.				4	
2. Plan developed each season for procurement, scheduling, planting, and/or maintenance of landscapes.		N/S			
3. Landscape ordinances and/or policies are in place. City landscape ordinance requires specifications for landscaping and maintenance for new and improved residential, commercial, and public development. Ordinances and/or policies are easily accessible.			1		
4. Landscaping is found throughout the community including public areas, parks, gateways, and/or key buildings. Landscape displays are selected for location, environmental conditions, and/or impact. Attractive designs are utilized and well maintained. Landscapes serve as focal areas in the community.			1		
5. Landscape displays enhance community entryways. The use of trees, shrubs, signage, hardscapes, and/or lighting creates a welcome display. The displays are attractive, well maintained, and create visual impact.		N/S			
6. Procedures in place to monitor and/or manage diseases and/or pests in the landscape. Pertinent information is available and/or communicated to the public.			1		
7. Lawn and turf areas display health and vigor. Procedures and practices, such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) are used to manage lawn and turf areas, including fertilizing, mowing, edging, proper watering, and/or weeding.		N/S			
8. Qualified landscape personnel and/or experienced contractors are available to design, install, source, and/or maintain public landscape sites. Additional support can be provided by growers, garden centers, County Extension Agents, and/or city departments. These resources are utilized to create and implement attractive municipal landscape displays.			1		

9. Training programs for proper landscape display care and maintenance are available for volunteers, full-time, and/or seasonal staff. Examples of trainers include, but are not limited to, Master Gardeners, County Extension, local garden centers, state agencies, and contractors.			1		
10. Recognition programs are in place monthly, quarterly, and/or annually for attractive displays created by businesses and/or residents.		N/S			
Totals:	Possible Points	Actual Points	Percent		
Landscaped Areas	80	9	11.25%		

Landscaped Areas Recommendations:

Cottage City is a very small town with only .25 square miles of land, of which 5.5 acres are parks. One thousand three hundred and fifty residents tend small parcels, and the remaining land is overseen by a combination of Prince George's County and Cottage City administrations. It is considered one of the River Towns by its proximity to the Anacostia River and four similar nearby communities.

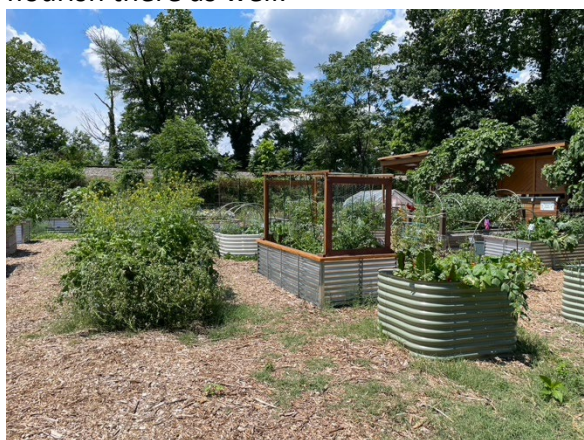


The number of landscaped areas is few, and municipal utilities, lands, and roadways account for most of the territory. Street trees are the most frequent source of landscaping, but as the available open areas for planting have been planted, the emphasis has turned to residential properties. This year, the town hall and police station, situated in a residential neighborhood was



beautified with the addition of new flag poles and flags plus many annuals all around the building. Looking like other homes in the community, Town Hall serves as an inspiration to the community. In addition, a gazebo with grill was built and is available to rent for \$25.00, with access to indoor facilities.

A community garden where edibles and flowers are planted is also landscaped with edible fruit trees and native tree species. Cisterns are used to collect rainwater from the roofs of sheds. Honeybees, mentioned previously, flourish there as well.



Consider updating your tree selections so “weedy” taxa are not planted. Contact your local County Extension Agents for suggestions. Create a picture book illustrating viable tree options and their growth habits so homeowners can better choose species to plant on their land.

Your newsletter could feature articles on why to plant native trees, how to build a rain garden, incorporate rain barrels into the landscape, how to plant a tree, and how to avoid contracting poison ivy.



The Town Hall is attractively landscaped. *You might add evergreens for winter interest. The new area to be planted as a native plant garden should have some hardscaping so it does not look weedy. Also consider adding interpretation so visitors learn what is being grown and why.*

Consider adding large, frost-free, plant containers, which would add another element to the landscape at Town Hall. These could be changed out depending upon the season and also serve as entrance markers for the facility. This could be done in-house or contracted out.

Consider identifying and designating a local yard as “garden of the month”. With the owner’s permission, post a temporary sign in the yard and include a picture in your newsletter, The Cottage.

URBAN FORESTRY: Strategic design, use, installation, and maintenance of trees and associated green spaces for environmental, aesthetic, shade, and community benefits, including but not limited to street trees, park trees, native and ornamental species, naturalized areas, woodlands, and tree canopies on public and private lands, with attention to proper selection, placement, and long-term care to ensure sustainability, resilience, and quality of life.	Not Applicable (N/A)	Not Started (N/S) 0	In Progress 1-2	In Place 3-5	Surpasses 6-8
1. The municipal plan addresses the role urban forest initiatives play in the green infrastructure of the community. Policy is enacted and enforced that includes performance requirements to meet the minimum crown canopy and/or succession planting.					7
2. Municipal ordinance enacted and enforced for tree planting and/or preservation. Ordinance addresses the handling and removal of damaged, dying, or dead trees. Ordinance includes public property, private property, and new construction projects. Communication of ordinances and policies are easily accessible.				3	
3. Tree board and/or department is available, active, and/or interact with the community. Examples include, but are not limited to, tree planting events, addressing safety concerns, education, and making recommendations to municipality.					7
4. Certified municipal personnel, trained arborist, urban forester, and/or Department of Natural Resources (DNR) entity actively manages the urban forest.					7
5. Trees are healthy and contribute to public health and wellness. Procedures are in place for the appropriate selection, diversity of tree species, proper spacing, planting depth, and/or monitoring and managing diseases and pests. Pertinent information is available and/or communicated to the public.					7
6. Policies are implemented for the protection of historic trees located on public and private properties. Tree programs exist that spotlight and honor historic trees. Trees are labeled and/or indexed. Historic trees are highlighted in a brochure, tree walk, and/or website.				3	
7. Programs in place to increase, support, promote, and/or protect trees. Examples include, but are not limited to, civic native tree nursery, repurposing fallen trees, managing destructive pests, and urban orchards.					6
8. Efforts are in place to educate and raise the public awareness of the importance of urban forestry. Examples include, but are not limited to, the use of print, videos, websites, apps, and social media.					7

9. Trees are identified in public sites such as arboretums, parks, and/or cemeteries. Examples include, but are not limited to, identification labels, descriptive signage, QR codes, kiosks, maps, apps, and brochures.		N/S			
10. Policies are implemented, and education is available for the safe participation by volunteers and staff in planting trees on public properties. Ongoing urban forest tree care training and educational information and/or seminars available for residents and/or businesses.				3	6
11. Effective communication of recommended trees is available to the public. Topics include "Right Tree in the Right Place," mulching, placement, spacing, and/or maintenance. Examples of communication include, but are not limited to, lectures, print, city website, library, City Hall, and social media.			2		
12. The municipality is a member of urban forestry organizations, participates in programs, and/or earns designations and awards. Examples include, but are not limited to, Tree City USA, Arbor Day Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and regional or state agencies.					6
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percent
Urban Forestry	96		64		66.66%

Urban Forestry Recommendations:

A stellar Urban Forestry program is in place and supported by the municipality and granting agencies. Historically, new tree plantings have predominantly been in road right-of-ways. Fewer available spots are now available for street tree plantings because the number of new tree sites has already been filled. As this happened, the residential properties needing attention are being addressed. Dangerous trees on private property are being removed, and strangling vines have been taken down so existing trees can flourish. The City has allocated \$25,000 for the Private Property Tree Maintenance Program as seen in the FY 2026-2027 city budget. Cottage City has posted information about its tree preservation efforts on its website. The Tree Canopy Committee's goal is to enhance and preserve green spaces and to increase the tree canopy for environmental resilience and improved quality of life. Native tree species are advocated.



Congratulations on being a Tree City USA recipient again and on celebrating tree plantings on Arbor Day. Your commitment to these programs and financial support of tree care is evidenced by your tree canopy and how well it looks.

Two resources that might be of use are: The most recent U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 2025, Forest Inventory and Analysis snapshot of the Forests of Maryland: https://www.fs.usda.gov/nrs/pubs/ru/ru_fs376.pdf and diagnostic tools to identify specific symptoms for trees and shrubs: [University of Maryland Extension](#).

Newly planted trees need to be regularly watered to help establish them. A water truck needs to be made or purchased to help take care of all city plantings. Homeowners should be able to assume the responsibility of watering their own trees, given careful instructions depending on the planting site and size of the saplings. Your consultant, who is a certified arborist and the American Landscaping company, should give instructions.

Consider planting more native oaks as they are a keystone species that supports a surprising number and variety of fauna. See "The Nature of Oaks" by Douglas W. Tallamy.

Keeping a tree inventory up to date takes a commitment and should be budgeted annually so you do not get behind, especially if there have been any destructive storms or insect infestations. If you have an up-to-date inventory and great losses, you can apply for FEMA funds if available.

Provide ongoing education about how to mulch trees, especially the harm caused when mulch is too deep, e.g., volcano mulching, basic pruning techniques, etc.

ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES: Environmental initiatives are purposeful actions, programs, or policies designed to protect, preserve, or restore the natural environment and to reduce human impact on the planet, promote sustainability, and ensure a healthier ecosystem for current and future generations. Environmental and sustainable leadership includes policies, plans, and programs for water, and resource conservation; pollution control; trash, recycling, and reuse; climate change issues; green Infrastructure; and alternative energy sources. Environmental initiatives can be led by governments, businesses, communities, or individuals.	Not Applicable (N/A)	Not Started (N/S) 0	In Progress 1-2	In Place 3-5	Surpasses 6-8
1. Comprehensive/Master Environmental Plan in place to identify, protect, restore, and/or maintain natural areas. Examples include, but are not limited to, removal of invasives, no-mow areas planted with native grasses and wildflowers, and succession tree plantings. The plan promotes water conservation, alternative energy use, food security and sustainability, carbon reduction, and/or responsible land management. The plan is accessible and reviewed annually.					6
2. Environmental board and/or Green Team are available, active, and/or interact with the community. Examples may include, but are not limited to, sustainability initiatives, events, education, and making recommendations to the municipality					7
3. Public awareness strategies regarding environmental issues are implemented and effective. This includes but is not limited to, the Reduce/Recycle/Reuse program, Earth Day events, pollution prevention, "leave no trace," landfill reduction, and community clean-up days. Examples of communication avenues include, but are not limited to, lectures, print, city website, city hall, library, and social media.					7
4. Programs exist and are available for all ages to educate, encourage, and/or expand the understanding of the role and importance of pollinators and ecological habitats.				3	
5. Green infrastructure policies, techniques, and/or inventory mapping are used throughout the community and regularly updated. Examples include, but are not limited to, naturalization, soils, topography, xeriscaping, rain gardens, wetlands, and suitable plant varieties to enhance such features as traffic calming, bank stabilization, stormwater run-off, and water management. Displays are well maintained.				3	
6. Home and business energy audits are available and promoted. Incentives are available and communicated for items such as solar energy, water conservation, home appliance replacement, weatherization, etc.				5	

7. Water conservation and water quality measures are widely promoted throughout the community and accessible. Residential and business practices include, but are not limited to, using rain barrels, rain gardens, and permeable surfaces; addressing water leaks in homes, businesses, and community spaces; choosing efficient appliances; and irrigating responsibly. Efforts also emphasize protecting water quality through stormwater management, reducing chemical runoff, proper disposal of household and yard waste, and maintaining healthy waterways.			1		
8. Management strategies are implemented for the effective reuse/repurpose of buildings, structures, and/or land. The municipality has a reuse plan in place.		N/S			
9. Recycling and trash containers are available, present themselves together, and are clearly labeled in public areas. Additional containers are available during special events. Collection is available for trash, recycling, composting, and food waste. Events and/or sites are offered for drop-off of hazardous, household, electronics, shredding, and/or difficult-to-recycle items.				3	
10. Reuse opportunities are offered and include clothing, books, household goods, resale shops, tool lending, durable medical equipment, and/or equipment repair initiatives available for donations and/or purchase.			1		
11. Energy-efficient vehicles/transportation for police, fire, public transit, and/or city employees is available. Options may include electric, fuel cell electric, plug-in electric hybrid, and/or compressed natural gas vehicles. Electric vehicle charging stations are located throughout the community and available to city, residential, and/or visitor vehicles. 240-volt home charging outlet installation incentive is available and promoted.				5	
12. Mulch from renewable and/or sustainable sources is appropriately used by the municipality. Mulch is available for residential use.				4	
13. Green building practices are implemented to minimize environmental impact while maximizing efficiency, health, and sustainability. These practices emphasize the use of environmentally responsible building materials—such as recycled, reclaimed, rapidly renewable, or locally sourced products—as well as non-toxic materials. Energy-efficient and renewable energy systems, including solar panels, wind turbines, geothermal heating and cooling, high-performance insulation and windows, and smart HVAC and energy management tools, are also encouraged. Certification systems such as LEED, WELL, or the Living Building Challenge are utilized to help track, validate, and achieve comprehensive sustainability goals.				3	
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percent
Environmental Initiatives	104		48		46.15%

Environmental Initiatives Recommendations:

Cottage City residents and administration are working to tackle their Environmental Initiatives. They are trying hard to be a model for sustainable community action. Some key initiatives include Food waste reduction and composting, Rainwater conservation, Solar Energy Adoption, Green Infrastructure like community gardens and pollinator-friendly habitats, Community Engagement like Dumpster Days and Creek and River cleanups, Strategic Planning and Affordable Housing for Diverse Populations. Cumulatively, you are making great strides in these areas and are leaders to be emulated.

A high number of homeowners have added solar panels to their residences and subsequently have reduced their electricity costs and also the drain on the electrical grid. *Consider putting solar panels over the Town Hall parking lots, which will also protect vehicles from sun and snow while generating electricity. Use the funds you get from the panels you have on the Town Hall to help pay for the project.*

The Cottage City Green Team is very proactive and has made a favorable impact on the environment and community with various initiatives. For such a small community, you have had great results: they have helped reduce the use of insecticides for controlling mosquitos by introducing Bacillus dunks as an effective means of control. Members are reducing the number of weedy nonnative Ailanthus trees to help stem the spread of the Spotted Lantern Fly, which feeds on it and more than a hundred species of plants. See <https://cals.cornell.edu/integrated-pest-management/outreach-education/whats-bugging-you/spotted-lanternfly/spotted-lanternfly-biology-and-lifecycle> Also many members are very active in the Community Garden, which shares some of its excess produce.

The doggie bag idea of dispensing a clean-up bag as well as a doggie treat is a great idea.

A sign to promote the efforts of the Green Team and how to become a member should be posted at each Green Team worksite to recruit new members.

Create an Adopt-a-Rain-Garden Program

Rather than relying only on town maintenance, residents, civic groups, scouts, or businesses could "adopt" rain gardens and bioswales. Each garden would have a small sign recognizing its caretakers and explaining how it reduces pollution entering the Anacostia River.

Consider having a Community BioBlitz Weekend

Residents use apps like iNaturalist to identify every bird, butterfly, insect, tree, and flower found in Cottage City over one weekend. This creates a biodiversity inventory that can be repeated every year. Keep track of it on your city's website.

*If Cottage City wants to distinguish itself nationally, we recommend creating a **Living Laboratory for Climate Resilience**. The town or port towns could partner with nearby schools, universities, and nonprofits to pilot innovative approaches to stormwater management, urban forestry, biodiversity, community engagement, and environmental education. Cottage City's compact size makes it an ideal place to test ideas that could later be replicated across other municipalities. Given its existing Green Team, tree canopy work, community garden, and Sustainable Maryland certification, it already has the foundation for such a role.*

Station recycling and trash cans together. If one or the other is the only can available, recycling and trash will be thrown in the same container.

CELEBRATING HERITAGE: Celebrating heritage in a community includes recognition, designation, protection, commemoration, and celebration of historical, cultural, natural, agricultural, and industrial resources, including but not limited to, traditions, stories, landmarks, buildings, artifacts, events, and practices that reflect the community's identity. Efforts may include preservation, interpretation, education, and programming that foster pride, belonging, and awareness of diverse cultural roots while maintaining and enhancing the community's heritage.	Not Applicable (N/A)	Not Started (N/S) 0	In Progress 1-2	In Place 3-5	Surpasses 6-8
1. Historic Preservation, Historic Society, and/or Architectural Review Board are available, active, and/or interact with the community. Activities/responsibilities include, but are not limited to, review proposals for construction and rehabilitation, promote historic preservation incentives, submit recommendations to National Register, and designate local historic landmarks.				3	
2. Historic Preservation ordinances are enacted and enforced. Ordinances effectively provide commercial and/or residential designation, guidance, and/or protection. Ordinances, policies, and restoration resources are available, easily accessible, and communicated.				3	
3. Historic districts, neighborhoods, structures, landmarks, and/or objects are identified and/or labeled. Designations by such organizations as the Department of Archives and History and/or National Register are in place and/or in progress.		N/S			
4. Cemeteries and monuments are in place and well maintained. Historical plaques are used and well maintained. Examples of plaque locations include, but are not limited to, buildings, sites, residences, districts, historical events and people, and battle sites. Historical Records are available for public reference.				3	
5. Historical museums and/or interpretive displays are available and maintained. Events and educational opportunities are held for all age groups to utilize historic assets.				5	
6. Archives, artifacts, community records, and/or oral histories are collected, safely stored, preserved, and/or catalogued.				5	
7. Staff and/or volunteers are trained to maintain historical sites, archives, records, collections, artifacts, structures, and/or landscapes. Historic educators are trained to effectively communicate a community's history.		N/S			

8. Historic preservation incentives are available and promoted. Incentives may include, but are not limited to, tax credits, waived permit fees, eased setbacks, and/or rebates.		N/S			
9. Programs are in place for the purchase, installation, and/or long-term maintenance of memorial features. Examples include, but are not limited to, memorial benches, trees, brick pathways, and lamp posts.		N/S			
10. Natural and agricultural areas are identified and protected. Designation by such organizations as The Nature Conservancy, the National Park Service, Department of Natural Resources are in place and/or in progress.	N/A				
11. Programs and/or events are available to bring history to life. Examples include, but are not limited to, theater dramas, reenactments, and historic characters at public events.		N/S			
12. Community heritage and/or cultural diversity are supported and promoted to all ages. Educational resources are available such as websites, publications, tours, interpretive signage, mobile apps, and/or programs.				5	
13. Youth of all ages and abilities participate in historical programs. Examples include, but are not limited to, lectures, tours, events, reenactments, research, and reader's theater. Participants are recognized for their efforts and/or achievements.		N/S			
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percent
Celebrating Heritage	96		24		25.00%

Celebrating Heritage Recommendations:

Knowing local history allows individuals to develop a deeper understanding of the community they live in and its people. By studying the events, traditions, and culture of a particular region, one can gain a richer appreciation for the place and its inhabitants and valuable insights into current issues and challenges. Knowing local history can foster a sense of belonging and identity, as individuals make connections based on their own roots and heritage. Additionally, local history can inform and inspire the preservation of cultural heritage sites, traditions, and decisions about development efforts.

Developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a streetcar suburb, Cottage City retains the compact, walkable layout typical of that era. Its collection of modest cottages and bungalows creates a cohesive historic character that reflects its name and a sensibility of practicality rather than grandeur. Since its incorporation in 1924, the town has maintained local governance, enabling residents to shape municipal services, land use, and community improvements.

The following are some actionable ways to brand Cottage City using the streetcar suburb concept.

Visual Identity & Public Imagery: Create or update the town's visual branding to include stylized silhouettes of cottages and an early 20th-century electric streetcar. This roots the town's imagery in its founding era. For a heritage corridor like Cottage City's, this style could become a unifying theme. Similar black-and-white silhouettes could depict: a newspaper boy, bicyclist, mother pushing a pram, children playing hoop or marbles, a trolley as it passes by, a firefighter in period uniform, shopkeepers or townspeople conversing, etc. The same silhouette style used throughout the district would create a cohesive historical walking experience and reinforce the community's early-20th-century identity. *Create a Cottage and Trolley-Inspired Logo and Seal*



Activate Bladensburg Road with Public Art Murals: As an inexpensive, short-term improvement to the facades, commission a local artist to paint stylized silhouettes on the sides of buildings along Bladensburg Road. A mural can depict residents boarding the Washington, Spa Spring or Greta Railroad trolleys with the town's iconic uniform cottages in the background. The images add a feeling of nostalgia and safety. Painted silhouettes can effectively mitigate blight. By utilizing a concept known as "creative placemaking," painted figures on empty storefronts or blank walls visually simulate pedestrian activity, add visual interest, and help create a renewed sense of place in struggling districts.



On the future site of a community outreach center, the former Cottage City & Colmar Manor firehouse, consider featuring its history with silhouettes of early fire trucks on the front and side of the building.



Wayfinding Signs: Consider the installation of vintage-style, cast-iron street signs and neighborhood entry markers along Bladensburg Road and 38th Avenue. Design them to mimic historic trolley stop indicators. Make your signs part of your community's identity.

Historic plaques: The oldest tree and oldest house in town are plaqued. Add plaques to the oldest firehouse, an example of the oldest Sears house, history of the railroad, and streetcar route(s), etc.

Market the "Cottage" Architecture:

- *Host "Original Cottage" Home Tours or create a self-guided walking tour:* Promote the town's unique, historic 1910s-1920s four-room cottages built by Charles Lightbrown or Sears catalog homes (or "Modern Homes"), pre-cut kit houses sold via mail order by Sears, Roebuck and Co. between 1908 and 1942. Launch an annual architectural walking tour highlighting how these streetcar-accessible homes offered affordable homeownership to returning WWI veterans.
- *Historic District Designation:* Lean into the branding strategies used by neighboring Mount Rainier (Prince Georges, MD), Irvington (Portland, MD), and Shaker Heights (Cleveland, OH). Work toward a federal historic streetcar suburb designation to foster community pride and attract buyers interested in historic preservation.



Promote modern Eco-Friendly & Walkable Positioning of Cottage City:

- *"First-Generation Transit-Oriented Development" (TOD):* Market Cottage City to urban professionals as a sustainable, walkable haven. Use slogans like *"Cottage City: Green Living Since the Streetcar Era"* to connect its historical, dense layout with modern environmentalism.
- *Pedestrian/ Bicycle Trail Integration:* Position the town as a highly connected hub. Highlight how the original streetcar-era grid pattern seamlessly links neighborhoods to the nearby Anacostia River Trail system and modern bus lines along the Route 1 corridor.

Community Events & Merchandising:

- *Trolley-Themed "Cottage City Day":* Theme the annual [Cottage City Day festival](#) around the town's transit origins. Rent a trackless, wheeled tourist trolley to transport residents around town for the day, stopping at historic points of interest. Encourage residents to wear turn-of-the-century apparel or vintage clothing.
- *Vintage Community Merchandise:* A community foundation could fundraise by selling retro-style posters, canvas tote bags, and t-shirts featuring classic trolley route typography at the Town Hall. Use catchy marketing phrases like *"Cottage City: Just a Streetcar Ride Away."*



OVERALL IMPRESSION: The overall impression of a community refers to the design, maintenance, and condition of physical, social, and cultural elements that collectively shape the perception of a community's character and identity. These include, but are not limited to, amenities, infrastructure, signage, public spaces, streetscapes, and visible upkeep of public and private properties. Ordinances, regulations, and enforcement addressing signage, nuisances, and property maintenance contribute to reducing visual clutter, enhancing aesthetics, and fostering a welcoming atmosphere that reflects community values.	Not Applicable (N/A)	Not Started (N/S) 0	In Progress 1-2	In Place 3-5	Surpasses 6-8
1. Ordinances are enacted and enforced to address issues such as overgrown lots, abandoned vehicles, unscreened dumpsters, public nuisances, unregulated garage sales, building facades, and/or empty storefronts windows. Ordinances are routinely reviewed and updated as needed.				3	
2. Code enforcement/compliance officer is available. Violations are detected, investigated, and/or resolved. Code enforcement includes, but is not limited to, public health, safety, consumer protection, building standards, and land use.				5	
3. Communication of ordinances is easily accessible. Examples of communication include, but are not limited to, lectures, print, city website, library, City Hall, social media, and calendar of events.				5	
4. First impressions are positive in residential, business, and/or municipal areas. Properties, buildings, structures, grounds, decks, patios, and yards are neat and in order. Examples include, but are not limited to, lack of vandalism, graffiti, broken windows, peeling or faded paint, and rust. Programs exist and are effective to minimize graffiti, litter, and nuisance areas.					6
5. Community infrastructure is in good condition. Examples include, but are not limited to, roadways, road shoulders, curbs, corner pads, medians, sidewalks, railroad crossings, sewers, transformers, and/or utility poles.					6
6. Community amenities are in good condition. Examples include, but are not limited to, signs, site furnishings, public restrooms, water features, lamp posts, benches, bicycle racks, drinking fountains, trash and recycling receptacles, safe parking, proper lighting, crosswalks/pavement markings, containers, planters, and/or cigarette receptacles.				4	
7. Community is accessible to people of all abilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, public buildings, parking, sidewalks, public transportation, playgrounds, parks, sports fields, and trails.					6

8. Wayfinding signage is visible, attractive, and in appropriate locations throughout the community. Signage adequately lists directional information and/or areas of interest.		N/S			
9. Public art is located throughout the community. Features such as banners, murals, and/or statues are used, attractive, and effective.				3	
10. Year-round seasonal decorations are used in key areas. The decorations are well maintained and attractive. Examples include, but are not limited to, lighting, ornamental displays, wreaths, planters, luminaries, and displays in government buildings, residential homes, and storefronts.			1		
11. Pet waste policies are posted and/or enforced. Pet clean-up stations are available throughout the community. Stations are monitored and stocked.				5	
12. Public restrooms are available, ADA compliant, and cleaned routinely.				5	
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percent
Overall Impression	96		49		51.04%

Overall Impression Recommendations:

For first-time visitors, the way a community presents itself is of great importance. The look and feel of the community experienced by a visitor will most likely influence how long they stay, if they will return, and whether or not they will speak about the community positively or negatively.

Consider short-term and long-term goals and projects.

Add more creative crosswalk art. They enhance streetscapes, boost community pride, and improve safety by encouraging both pedestrians and motorists to be more aware of their surroundings. Young people can be involved in crosswalk art projects.

Straighten street signs periodically. It creates a sense of care.

Establish and/or review your design guidelines, branding, historic preservation code and downtown ordinances, etc. to confirm they are current and represent the look you want to present and preserve.

Above all, review the proposed zoning changes and long-term plans for Bladensburg Road by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: Community involvement refers to the active participation of individuals, organizations, and groups in efforts that support and enhance the well-being of the community. Contributions include, but are not limited to, volunteering, mentoring, fundraising, resource sharing, organizing events, serving on boards or committees, and supporting cultural, educational, social, and service initiatives. Engagement fosters shared responsibility, strengthens the social fabric, builds trust, and enhances quality of life while inspiring new and continued involvement.	Not Applicable (N/A)	Not Started (N/S) 0	In Progress 1-2	In Place 3-5	Surpasses 6-8
1. Programs are in place to encourage, recruit, engage and/or recognize a diverse base of volunteers of all ages, abilities, cultures, and/or segments of the community in each of the America in Bloom criteria. Volunteers from businesses, residents, schools, and/or organizations participate, and opportunities present themselves to residents and/or businesses to get involved.		N/S			
2. Residential landscapes provide streetscape appeal and reflect community value in landscaping. They are neat, attractive, and well maintained.				5	
3. Annual recognition of a community champion. This may be from the schools, social organizations, Chamber of Commerce, businesses, to include issues that are important to the community, including, but not limited to, housing, health, and environmental initiatives.		N/S			
4. Secure food programs are available. Examples include, but are not limited to, hunger relief efforts, food pantries, garden plots, rooftop gardens, community gardens, farmers markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).				4	
5. Volunteer boards are active and/or comprised of representatives from business and residents. Examples include, but are not limited to, In Bloom committee, Rotary, Veteran groups, Chamber of Commerce, Scouting, HOAs, municipal boards, and faith-based organizations.				3	
6. Youth of all ages and abilities participate in community events. Examples include, but are not limited to, lectures, tours, events, reenactments, research, and reader's theater. Participants are recognized for their efforts and/or achievements.		N/S			

7. Youth organizations such as Scouts, Green Teams, schools, and 4H encourage community involvement. Participants are recognized for their efforts and/or achievements. Efforts are communicated to the public through social media, newsletters, city website, and other methods. Youth-focused programs are in place for multiple ages and/or abilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, sports, gardening, clubs, and lectures.		N/S			
8. Volunteer engagement in parades, festivals, and community events as measured by but not limited to event volunteers, the frequency and variety of events, a dedicated volunteer coordinator, and number of volunteer hours.			2		
9. Volunteers participate in community improvement initiatives. Examples include, but are not limited to, Habitat for Humanity, home repair programs, disaster relief, and clean-up days.			2		
10. Residential best practices regarding water conservation measures are used throughout the community. Examples include, but are not limited to, water-saving shower heads, full loads for dishwashers and washing machines, sink and toilet leaks fixed, lawn irrigation, drought-resistant plants, and use of gray water.		N/S			
11. Compassionate Community Response: The community demonstrates organized efforts to provide compassionate care during crises such as floods or hurricanes, wildfires, homelessness, and tragic deaths of community members. Support may include short- and long-term assistance (e.g., meals, housing, support groups, vigils, warming centers, garden therapy), volunteer service, fundraising, and coordinated relief efforts.			1		
12. Training programs for volunteer excellence are in place to teach best practices assuring every volunteer is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed for all volunteer positions. Training should include standardized best practices, role-specific instruction, hands-on learning, mentorship, safety, communication, and teamwork.			1		
13. The community has a disaster preparedness plan in place and routinely reviews and updates it to ensure effectiveness, incorporates lessons learned from past events, and conducts regular training exercises to maintain readiness among residents and emergency personnel.		N/S			
Totals:	Possible Points		Actual Points		Percent
Community Involvement	104		18		17.30%

Community Involvement Recommendations:

Cottage City is a small town, so most religious, nonprofit, and volunteer opportunities are not based within its boundaries but are shared across the surrounding “Port Towns” area of Prince George’s County. Residents typically participate in programs that operate regionally but serve Cottage City directly through food support, housing assistance, youth services, and mutual aid networks.

Locally, one of the most visible community efforts is the Cottage City Community Garden, which brings residents together around gardening, food access, and environmental stewardship. The town also supports informal mutual aid such as the Snow Angels volunteer program, where residents help neighbors—particularly older adults—clear snow and manage basic winter needs. These smaller-scale efforts reflect the town’s strong tradition of neighbor-to-neighbor support.

A broader network of nonprofit organizations in Prince George’s County provides much of the structured social service and volunteer infrastructure. Key organizations include United Communities Against Poverty (UCAP), which offers emergency housing and food assistance; CASA of Prince George’s County, which trains volunteers to advocate for children in foster care; and Mission of Love Charities, which provides food, clothing, and holiday support. Volunteer emergency services through the county fire and EMS system also offer opportunities for residents to engage in public safety and emergency response roles.

Cottage City has two churches. Religious institutions in and around Cottage City also play an important service role, often operating food pantries, clothing drives, youth programs, and seasonal outreach efforts. While each congregation is small, together they form an important part of the community safety net. In combination, these nonprofits, faith-based groups, and volunteer networks create a layered support system that connects Cottage City to the wider region’s resources while preserving its close-knit, local character.

Youth opportunities in and around Cottage City are primarily delivered through regional and school-linked programs rather than town-based organizations. Families often participate in scouting programs such as Scouts BSA, Cub Scouts, and Girl Scouts, which are active throughout Prince George’s County and provide outdoor education, leadership training, service projects, and community engagement. In addition, 4-H programs through the University of Maryland Extension offer youth hands-on learning in agriculture, environmental science, cooking, robotics, and civic leadership, with clubs and countywide events accessible to Cottage City residents.

Beyond these, Prince George’s County Public Schools and nearby recreation centers provide after-school enrichment, summer camps, mentoring programs, and sports leagues. Local libraries and county parks also host regular youth programming, including STEM activities, reading clubs, and environmental education. Together, these opportunities give Cottage City youth access to a broad mix of service, skill-building, and leadership experiences, even though many programs are organized at the county or regional level rather than within the town itself.

Prior to nationwide publicity around the actions of ICE, involving the Hispanic population in volunteer activities was identified as a challenge. Now it may be even more of a challenge. The town’s newsletter is published in English and Spanish.

Review the above items and identify how Cottage City encourages residents to volunteer, as well as work and play together.

Strategies to support the participation of Hispanics include addressing heightened concerns for personal safety plus responsive strategies that emphasize family, shared trust, and relationship-building. Flexible scheduling, bilingual resources, and communal, welcoming environments, rather than relying on traditional, individualistic volunteer models, have helped other organizations to overcome lower participation rates.

Include in the Community Profile information about boards, committees, programs, events, and actions related to the items listed above. Include how the local police and fire departments interact with the community.

EVALUATION TOUR PREPARATION AND ACTIONS: Community's readiness prior to and the action during the Evaluation Tour include an informative Community Profile, preparedness prior to Advisors' arrival, and effective content during the Evaluation Tour. Succession plans are evident.	Not Applicable (N/A)	Unmet (U/M) 0	Met 1
1. Community contact was available for pre-visit meeting for introductions and discussion of preparations.			1
2. Community Profile was provided to Advisors at least two weeks prior to the first official tour date.			1
3. Community Profile includes contacts with emails and positions.			1
4. Community Profile from a returning community includes what is new and implemented from previous Advisors' recommendations (scored as Not Applicable for a new community).		U/M	
5. Community Profile includes a map with tour boundaries and a daily itinerary.		U/M	
6. Evaluation Tour provided a representative cross-section of the community.			1
7. Advisors met with elected/appointed municipal leaders and staff.			1
8. Advisors met with the business and non-profit community.			1
9. Advisors met with volunteers.			1
10. Advisors met with the media (print, radio, tv, social media) and/or have been given media contact information.		U/M	
11. Advisors were asked to give a presentation.			1
12. A tour wrap-up session was conducted with a community representative.			1
13. Enough time was allotted for Advisors to work on the Evaluation Report in a quiet place with adequate Wi-Fi.			1
14. Succession plans are evident, and next year's chair is present and participating in the tour.			1
15. CN grant project(s) are reviewed (scored as Not Applicable for a community not receiving a CN grant).	N/A		
Totals:	Possible Points	Actual Points	Percent
Evaluation Tour Preparation and Actions	14	11	78.57%

Evaluation Tour Preparation and Actions Recommendations:



Involve more government employees, business leaders, and residents in addressing aspects of the community tour. Bring together people with common interests, e.g., history buffs, historians, and people restoring antiques, living in an old house, etc. or environmentalists, birders, and gardeners. Consider different aspects of the tour (e.g., meeting places or meals) as opportunities to bring people together, provide opportunities to talk about what they contribute to the town, and to learn what others with a similar passion are doing. People are usually flattered to be invited and enjoy an opportunity to talk about their personal interests as related to the town. It builds pride, generates new ideas, and helps move projects forward.

The Community Profile This report accompanies the Cottage City Community Profile written in preparation for visits by America in Bloom advisors. The Cottage City Community Profile provides a clear description of two challenges facing the community: (1) a blighted business district (Bladensburg Road Corridor), and (2) impacts of the CSX rail line on residential communities. Like any train, the CSX has the potential for

derailment. In addition, its land adjacent to residential backyards appears to be unmanaged. An additional challenge, suggested during our visit to Cottage City, is (3) the lack of a railroad commuter stop.

Regarding the Community Profile, here are a few recommendations:

- *Include a description of shared services and projects with other Port towns;*
- *Add an appendix with the many acronyms and abbreviations associated with Cottage City;*
- *Take care to include new projects and any progress toward addressing previous recommendations;*
- *Add information about activities organized by the municipality, Police Department, Fire Department, and other organizations. Think about what happens in Cottage City and add it to the Community Profile, perhaps as a list of events by month;*
- *Provide the community profile to the advisors two weeks in advance of their visit.*

The more information outlined in the Community Profile the more valuable it is to the advisors and to others now and in the future.

In closing, we want to thank you for participating in America in Bloom for the second year in a row. We know that this commitment demands more of a small community than of a large one simply because fewer people are available to do the work. Thank you for taking it on! Each time it will get easier. You'll add to and update an existing Community Profile, know how to plan the itinerary, and know what the evaluation process entails, etc. Each time you become more connected to the America in Bloom community. Cottage City has already set an example for other communities in small and big ways with Snow Angels and with the detailed attention to your tree canopy. We anticipate hearing new ideas from you, seeing photographs of your continued progress, and celebrating your accomplishments.

May the coming months for Cottage City blossom with possibility,

Carrie and Bruce, Your 2026 America in Bloom Advisors.

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 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.

2026 Community Recognitions

Recognized Criterion: Urban Forestry

Cottage City, Maryland's volunteer Green Team has played a leading role in expanding and managing the community's urban forest. Through years of strategic tree planting, the city is approaching nearly 100% tree canopy cover. Although Cottage City encompasses just 0.25 square miles and is home to approximately 1,350 residents, it has made an extraordinary commitment to its urban forest.

Professional consultants conducted a comprehensive inventory of the city's street trees, evaluating the health and condition of each specimen while identifying trees requiring replacement. The inventory also mapped all available planting locations for new trees. To date, the Green Team planted 210 trees on public property and within street rights-of-way, filling every available public planting site.

The Green Team has also supported private property owners by removing hazardous trees and invasive vines that can weaken or kill mature trees. Much of this work has been made possible through grants from *Sustainable Maryland*. Demonstrating its continued commitment, Cottage City has allocated \$25,000 in its 2026–2027 budget

for additional tree planting and to assist homeowners with the care, replacement, and long-term stewardship of trees on private property.

The benefits of this investment extend far beyond attractive, tree-lined streets. An extensive urban canopy captures and stores carbon, improves air quality, reduces stormwater runoff, moderates summer temperatures, and provides valuable wildlife habitat. Research has also shown that communities with abundant trees experience improved public health, including lower rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and depression. Tree-lined neighborhoods foster community pride, encourage social interaction, increase property values, and strengthen the city's tax base.

Cottage City's dedication to building and sustaining a thriving urban forest is an outstanding example of environmental stewardship, community engagement, and long-term planning—a true win-win for the community. Congratulations, Cottage City!

Noteworthy Project or Initiative: Snow Angels, Cottage City, MD

Cottage City exemplifies the spirit of neighbors helping neighbors through **Snow Angels**, a volunteer initiative launched this past winter to assist older adults and residents who need help managing winter weather. Coordinated by the town, the program matched 20 senior residents with six dedicated volunteers who provided snow shoveling and other basic winter assistance. Though modest in size, Snow Angels have a meaningful impact, strengthening community connections while helping residents remain safe and independent in their homes. The program reflects Cottage City's longstanding culture of compassion, volunteerism, and mutual support, demonstrating that even small acts of service can make a lasting difference in the quality of community life.

America in Bloom
PO Box 44005 • Columbus, OH 43204 • 614-453-0744
www.AmericaInBloom.org • aib@AmericaInBloom.org