

Tidy Towns Competition 2003

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Sligo**

Ref: **378**

County: **Sligo**

Mark: **196**

Category: **F**

Date: **11/06/2003**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2003	Mark Awarded 2002
Overall Developmental Approach	50	37	37
The Built Environment	40	32	32
Landscaping	40	31	30
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	19	19
Litter Control	40	19	19
Tidiness	20	10	10
Residential Areas	30	21	18
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	20	20
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	300	196	192

Overall Developmental Approach:

Last year's mark may have seemed disappointing to the committee, but in fact it was quite respectable in the context of second-year entries. From reading your answers to the questionnaire there is still a sense that you are feeling your way, and that is as it should be. Comparisons are said to be odious, but in fact there is a lot to be gained by studying how other large centres have fared: for example, Dundalk initially had very much the same kind of problems as yours - gradually over the years these have been remarkably well addressed. What a Tidy Towns Committee can best do in a centre as large as Sligo is encourage householders and business people to take responsible action for their particular premises, and also act as a conduit of civic concern to the official bodies. When you have precisely defined your objectives you will find it very useful to create a 3-year or 5-year Plan, listing projects to be tackled/completed in each specific year. Certainly much energy is wasted by committees who try to pick at the surface of too many projects all at once.

The Built Environment:

It is easy to pick out buildings which are superbly maintained and others which are not: the real core of the difficulty with Sligo's built environment is that whole sections have either not been properly maintained or else are suffering from 'planning blight' - i.e. areas awaiting redevelopment (e.g. new roadways) where long delays have occasioned general decay. The two most unsightly areas are Old

Market Street-High Street and the area from Wine Street shopping centre towards the Railway Station including Adelaide Street and surroundings. Traffic is a real contributing problem: it is not possible to appreciate what a handsome city this really is when there is an unending stream of industrial as well as private traffic through the centre; a by-pass has been too long delayed. Several splendid public buildings were praised last year; to which should now be added very well turned-out business premises including Mullaney's, Moffit's, Wehrly's, McHugh's, Supply Centre, Wood's. Some fine shopfronts like Foley's are situated in less than well kept buildings which detract. Lyons' outstanding premises won the Regional shopfront award in 2002.

Landscaping:

The hard landscaping on Kennedy Parade is impressive and is standing up well to wear; the street furniture is of a very high standard and the planting of trees and flowers complements the whole in a most tasteful way: a first class urban feature. Small areas of what are not precisely landscaping - lawns and gardens perhaps - throughout the city give pleasant breathing-space; a triangular green near the Abbey is typical, and there are plenty in newer estates. Among the many spots of colour and foliage which caught the attention most favourably were the herbaceous border at the Niland Gallery; bedding that included the most splendid lilies creating much needed vibrancy a rather drab area north of the Town Hall; a discreet fernery at the Court House; and tubs and window boxes in many public places such as the Railway Station. The brooding design of the Famine Graveyard gateway and sculpture combine to form a worthy memorial: it was a pity to find that this hallowed place was not well cared for, with weedy paths and litter and an approach though a unprepossessing car park.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You mention that you are 'involved in conservation and development of natural amenities in Sligo and its environs' but you do not say what amenities nor do you describe the extent of your involvement. More information would not only be interesting to the adjudicators but would almost undoubtedly result in higher marking under this heading. The superb natural riverine, estuarine and sylvan resources in Sligo are an enormous asset: probably there are groups which take an active interest whose work should be acknowledged. A variety of sea birds were noted, as well as swans and geese on the Garravogue in the city centre. It may be something of a cliché in suggesting signboards at appropriate places illustrating the local flora and fauna, but such information points do create interest, especially from visitors. Perhaps a local firm would sponsor such a project.

Litter Control:

There seemed to be an improvement on last year in the main streets, though unfortunately there were spots where disposable litter could be said to be appreciable on adjudication day - beside Dunne's stores in the eastern suburbs, at Cleveragh road, in the western portion of Wine Street, in the lane beside the Tower Hotel, in the lane beside Higgin's supermarket in the Mall and opposite the Niland Gallery, in the low level sidewalk at Hyde Bridge-Stephen St, and in the car park beside the Famine Graveyard. The basement window embrasures at the Court House are obviously a litter-catching point, as was noted last year. This is clearly a matter which will take time (which means education: through school projects) but there are some remedies which might be tried immediately: the really determined imposition of fines by the proper Authority, and the agreement of shop-keepers to each keep their particular sidewalk frontage litter free at all times: in fact this is a statutory requirement.

Tidiness:

Unfortunately dereliction and vacant premises contribute much to a sense of untidiness, yet this is only in a minority of areas. One of the saddest sights is the handsome blocked-up houses on either side of Dunne's in Wine St, their lower storeys covered in flyposting. While some individual premises in the Wine St car park are quite tidy, the general mix of shops, plastic and mass-produced signs, backs and roofscapes of varying heights and materials, inevitably look scruffy: an urgent Local

Authority design intervention is badly needed here - the really splendid development of Rockwood Parade and the opposite quay shows what can be achieved. Weed growth was surprisingly evident at the Methodist church and all along the inside of the wall at the Famine Graveyard car park. As will be seen below, residential areas were mostly very tidy on the date of adjudication, and the vast majority of public buildings and commercial premises in their own grounds were very tidy indeed.

Residential Areas:

Sligo possesses many distinguished town houses, the majority of which are well looked after. An unusually handsome terrace at Teeling and Chapel streets is a fine example: some maintenance could make it a real "showpiece". Thorn House in High St is also exceptionally distinguished, but needs considerable refurbishment. The area around Mail Coach Road has a mix of charming well established homes. Cartron is a mature suburb which exemplifies several others from the second half of the 20th century - well kept homes with pleasant gardens and well tended open spaces. New sidewalks were in the process of being laid at Lark Hill Rd - stone walls were admired here. There is an admirable spaciousness at The Park and also at Kestrel Drive. A very promising development was seen at First Sea Road, and its completion will be looked forward to; the same may be said of the extensive Yeat's Village, where emphasis is on gables and dormers. Of older areas, St John's Terrace is well maintained, as is Pearse Crescent with its decorative tubs.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Your suggestions for pedestrianisation are admirable: in some other large towns where it was thought that this would never happen, it eventually did, though after the provision of substantial relief roads. Most of the approach roads are well maintained, most streets are well surfaced, and some paving is excellent. Un-named lanes leading to the new quaysides are very attractive indeed - lighting and street furniture is of high quality in this area. Kennedy Parade has been very favourably referred to above in its landscaping aspect. It is a pity that there should be a reverse to this coin: there are some poorly kept lanes and entries in the city centre - the entrance to 'A1' at the Union St traffic lights is one such.

General Impression:

Lack of space prevents enlargement on some of the above. Under The Built Environment it should be added that several large factories (such as Minent, Abbott) and other modern buildings (such as the Government Offices, An Post HQ, the Swimming Pool, the General Hospital) are very well kept, as are their grounds; certain chain stores (such as Penney's, Tesco, Pound Store) on city centre streets respect the traditional streetscape to an admirable degree. The modern entrance and information centre at the Abbey blends admirably with antiquity. When filling in next year's entry form, please remember that you should be referring to work that has been done over the past 12 months, not what you intend to do - which should be part of your long-term development plan. Please do provide more information on your activities and achievements under each heading. Congratulations on taking up the challenge to make Sligo and even more pleasant place to live.