

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Spring Grove Estate
Limerick** Ref: **2088**

County: **Limerick** Mark: **196**

Category: **A** Date(s): **20/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	24	26
The Built Environment	50	23	24
Landscaping	50	22	24
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	11	11
Litter Control	50	27	27
Tidiness	30	18	20
Waste Minimisation	20	3	5
Residential Areas	40	26	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27	25
General Impression	10	4	4
TOTAL MARK	400	185	196

Overall Development Approach:

Spring Grove is most welcome to the 2012 TidyTowns competition. We are delighted that Spring Grove has returned to TidyTowns for what is only its second year. It is encouraging to note the significant progress that you have made since the last adjudicator's visit. Particularly it can be seen that you have a far more structured and coherent approach with projects under all the contest headings. You have retained seven on your committee and appear to have a very democratic approach to decision-making. It is most encouraging to note that you have plans to expand your activities to include the whole Mill Road area and this is excellent. Inclusivity is what TidyTowns is all about so it would be important for you to reach out to your neighbours in other estates. It would also bring your approach roads and local businesses into the fold. This expansion would yield dividends for all concerned.

You are commended for having reached out to schools and this is wonderful. You mentioned that they both have green flags and correctly identified that this is complementary to TidyTowns. Working together can benefit you both as you share ideas. Do give them a full mention here and let us know what level they are at in the green flag program.

You included a map this year and thank you for that. It is most important that you use the map to mark the location of particular projects so that the adjudicator will be sure to inspect them. Finally your use of photographs is excellent and it is always heartening to see before and after shots for work has been done and improvements made.

You have made contact with Limerick City Council but are there other groups that could be involved, e.g. sports clubs, youth groups, social organisations etc?

The Built Environment:

This section is concerned with your shared built heritage and the presentation of commercial or municipal buildings. As you expand your boundaries to include all of Mill Road this would become more relevant. For now your work on Corbally Baths will be included here. Do give more information on the nature of this area and its significance in the locality. It was not marked on the map.

Landscaping:

You have created five shrubbery beds and this is an excellent start as it seems from last year's report you had none!

Landscaping takes a variety of forms and each should complement the other. You are fortunate to have a number of mature trees and their value cannot be underestimated. They add a leafy air, protect your homes from wind and sun and believe it or not, keep your energy bills down! They also have year-round impact and provide resources for wildlife. It is noted that you are planting new trees and this represents an investment for the future.

More formal shrubbery can also provide year-round impact and is effective for screening or softening corners. Finally annual flowers add colour and are particularly effective in brightening doorways.

The new planting beds were admired and this is a great initiative for your group. It is suggested that many of the plants are too small for any real impact, especially since they are competing for attention with the towering birch and horse chestnuts. Lupins and Geraniums do add colour however. Elsewhere roses will provide perennial colour while the butterfly bush is good for colour and of course butterflies. Laurel will be hard to maintain into the future (apart from other problems - see the wildlife section).

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The first step in this heading, before you do anything, is to try to understand what wildlife is. The River Shannon is a special area of conservation for its species and habitats that are important on a European scale. It is therefore among the most important sites in Ireland for wildlife and it is on your doorstep! You can find out more by visiting www.npws.ie or by organising a talk from your local NPWS Ranger. Beyond the river tall trees and hedges provide food and cover for many plants and animals and so should be conserved. Unfortunately cherry laurel is a bad choice as it is an alien invasive species ([see invasivespeciesireland.com](http://invasivespeciesireland.com)). Its leaves are poisonous and it can strangle woodlands where its heavy leaves deprive light to all other plants. Where possible hawthorn should be used for hedging as it is a native plant.

The riverside area (baths?) should be included in your projects as it is a fantastic spot with an abundance of wildlife. The sign from 2004 says water quality had deteriorated, has it improved since? (See the website of the Environmental Protection Agency to find out). Unfortunately the bankside was slightly littered with broken glass etc.

Litter Control:

This is perhaps the most important area for many people as litter will ruin everything else. Do make sure that you have high-viz vests with 'tidy towns' across the back when doing litter picks. This will help you advertise your work and promote the anti-litter message. Well done on involving the children through the colouring contest.

Litter control in general was good in front of people's homes but less good on common areas such as the road into the estate and on greens.

Tidiness:

Do try to ensure that waste minimisation is considered under other headings as the contents of your skip may have gone to landfill (it may also have been segregated so it would be good to know which). You have completed a number of projects under this heading including removing graffiti, calming traffic and cutting back branches obscuring lighting.

The estate is extremely tidy and you have no major issues to contend with here. Kerbing is free of weeds and signage is clear and clean.

Waste Minimisation:

You have embarked on a number of projects here that shows you are making good headway in understanding this problem. The visit from the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government was most important. In urban areas many waste providers collect segregated waste. How is this done in Spring Grove? Do you have a brown waste collection? If not you could start a home composting promotion as it would reduce people's bin charges. Do you promote freetradeireland.ie?, where you can find new owners for unwanted items.

Your schools' achievements with the green flags should be given full airing here. There is also a 'Green Homes' initiative, also run by An Taisce, that may be of interest to you.

Residential Areas:

As you are for now an estate your homes are the main focus of your community. Your new estate sign was admired and efforts to integrate Irish are noted. The houses provide some variety in materials and all seem to have superbly kept lawns. Maturing trees are again a feature that really serves to soften the aspects here. Generally the estate is beautifully kept and there is an evident sense of pride in this community. A number of homes have beautiful displays of summer flowers with numbers 40 and 41 deserving of a special mention.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Including the Mill Road in your area would help you progress under this heading. This is a fine approach with an affluent, leafy air. The derelict houses across from number 22 have been well treated. The short hedge here does need to be trimmed at the base to improve appearances. Only do this between September and February in accordance with the Wildlife Act. Quite a bit of litter was to be found along the road, perhaps from passing traffic, so perhaps more attention is needed here.

General Impression:

Spring Grove has made a great start in the contest and you are commended for your vision and energy. A number of points were made in this report which are intended as constructive guidance as you move forward. Best of luck!