



SuperValu Tidy Towns

Caring for our environment

Residential Streets & Housing Areas



Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals

Handbook



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

SuperValu

Brought to you by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht
Tugtha chugaibh ag an Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail agus an Gaeltachta

The SuperValu TidyTowns competition commenced in 1958 and has since become Ireland’s best-known sustainable and environmental initiative. The competition is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, and has been proudly sponsored by SuperValu since 1991.

The competition is independently adjudicated under eight categories, these are;

Community: Your Planning & Involvement	Streetscape & Public Places
Green Spaces & Landscaping	Nature & Biodiversity in your Locality
Sustainability: Doing more with less	Tidiness & Litter Control
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes

This Handbook, which has been prepared with input from the national panel of TidyTowns Adjudicators, is divided into sections, each category is covered individually, however, the entrant is advised not to read each section in isolation from the others. Landscaping has an important role to play in the adjudication of Streetscapes and Public Places, Residential Streets and Housing Areas and Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes, Tidiness and Litter control, likewise will be looked at in a number of categories. We would encourage you therefore to refer to all categories regardless of the project or initiative being undertaken.

Please refer to the General Information section also which contains valuable information for all TidyTowns groups.

In this section, we look at “Residential Streets & Housing Areas” please refer to the scoring sheet to see the marks for this category. The entry form contains the following text to assist the entrant in completing this section of their entry form;

Residential streets that include Town Houses are integral parts of towns and villages and should be treated in a similar fashion to public and private housing developments. Consideration is given to proper presentation and maintenance of all properties with due cognisance given to maintenance of frontages, boundary and gable end walls. Gardens, where applicable, should be presented to a good standard. In housing developments, green areas should be appropriately managed for biodiversity and amenity. Children’s play areas to be considered with equipment maintained to best standards. Where possible individual estates should have suitable name signs – stones, plaques, sign posts, etc. preferably bilingual. Unfinished estates will not reflect badly on the efforts of any community but examples of how the community is addressing this issue should be highlighted.

In September 2015, 193 UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “Transforming our World”. The centrepiece of this Agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which reflect economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Throughout the entry form, you will see where many of these goals are aligned to the different TidyTowns categories. Please identify, if applicable, under each category where your projects or initiatives aim to address one or more of the sustainable goals.

You will see that the “Residential Streets and Housing Areas” category aligns to goals 11 & 17



Note: TidyTowns groups and volunteers are reminded that their safety and welfare must always take priority. In order to ensure the safety of volunteers, TidyTowns groups are encouraged to seek the advice of An Garda Síochána or any other relevant authority prior to undertaking projects on roads, roadsides and road verges etc.



RESIDENTIAL STREETS & HOUSING AREAS

Private dwellings along approach roads, within residential estates and within the town / village centre will be assessed on the presentation and maintenance of individual buildings including their gable walls, rear façades, roadside boundary walls / fencing, together with their private open space.

Public open spaces within residential estates are also considered and include their range of functions as well as their maintenance and presentation.

The TidyTowns group's liaison with Residents Associations is key to performance in this category of the competition; if there is no Residents Association the committee should consider approaching residents with a view to setting one up. The organisation of Garden and Estate Competitions is very effective as a means of improving the presentation of residential areas and are usually orchestrated by the Residents Associations. Also important is a good working relationship with the Local Authority especially through the Community Development Officer, Local Area Engineer and Heritage Officer.

What the Adjudicator considers

The presentation and appearance of:

- Private dwellings including their roadside boundary walls, fences and private open spaces
- Communal open spaces – their maintenance, presentation, function and universal accessibility
- Landscaping
- Estate signage and entrances
- Links to town centre and facilities
- Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals

PRIVATE DWELLINGS

Buildings which feature a co-ordinated colour scheme appropriate to their region make a strong visual impact and enhance the visual amenity of their town / village especially when general maintenance is to a high standard. It is also important that gable walls and rear façades which can be seen from the public realm enjoy an attractive presentation. Where painting of a number of buildings is proposed, funding maybe available from the Local Authority and / or LEADER Programme to assist under a Painting and Enhancement scheme, whereby materials are funded for works that will have an important impact on the local area. Ideally, period town houses should be presented in a manner that reflects and honours the design features of their original time period.

ROADSIDE BOUNDARY TREATMENT

There should be consistency of presentation in boundary treatment to private dwellings where these form part of a group; the same building materials should feature and if stone walls are used, reference should be made to local / regional variations. Raised cement mortar pointing should be avoided. It is important that roadside boundary walls either along approach roads, or marking entrances from these roads, are maintained in a good state of repair and freshly cleaned / painted as appropriate, as such properties are instrumental in creating a strong visual impression of a centre. Stone faced walls or rendered (plastered / dashed) walls, rather than brickwork, are preferable along the road frontage of new houses on the approaches to towns and villages.

ROADSIDE AREA TO BOUNDARY WALLS

Where roadside areas to boundary walls are grassed, especially on entrances to a centre, these can look particularly well as they give a soft 'parklike' effect as opposed to the hard appearance of concrete or tarmac. In the case of footpaths, it is important that their kerbs are maintained weed free without recourse to the use of herbicides. This also applies to the base of private roadside boundary walls. Residents should be encouraged to take responsibility for the maintenance of their own roadside boundary walls fencing and areas.

PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

The importance of well-kept individual front gardens cannot be overstressed as a contributor to the visual enhancement of streetscape / townscape. Open storage within private open space of unsightly materials which can be seen from the public area must be discouraged.

A Best Kept Garden competition can have a significant effect over time on the appearance of a neighbourhood. Improvements usually include the trimming of hedges, the repair of stone walls, replacing chain-link fences with timber post and rail, walls or hedges, removing weeds from the base of walls, painting metal fences, trimming grass verges and tree planting.

Individual householders and entire estates can contribute to wildlife habitat awareness and protection by the installation of bird, bat and owl boxes. Local wildlife surveys may also be undertaken in addition to the management of any local habitat which may be present; these could be undertaken in liaison with the school and perhaps the Local Authority Heritage Officer.

PUBLIC COMMUNAL OPEN SPACES / GREEN AREAS

It is important to decide on the function of the green open space(s). Do they provide adequate play space for children? Do they feature play equipment and is it well maintained? Are there opportunities for community facilities and / or habitat appreciation? Large communal green areas can provide opportunities for a wide range of community amenity activities in addition to supporting and enhancing biodiversity. A large green area can be managed by a careful mowing regime to create a wild flower meadow for pollinators with the outer perimeter maintained neatly trimmed for visual and recreational amenity (see Nature and Biodiversity in your locality category). Sections of large green areas can be used for 'Grow Your Own' initiatives and / or Community Orchards / Herb Gardens and similar. It is important that such developments feature universal accessibility. It is also important not to allow storage of pallets and green waste on open spaces as these can attract anti-social behaviour especially bonfires, which can leave 'scars' on green areas.

LANDSCAPING

Landscaped areas within estates can be hard or soft or a combination, but it is important to choose native planting species where possible to support biodiversity and to plant for seasonal interest and colour. A survey might be undertaken to establish existing species and their condition. The purpose of the planting should be clear – is it to create a feature, provide enclosure or to clothe an unattractive wall, building or site? Climbing plants can be used effectively on walls, especially the retaining and boundary walls of lanes within estates. Site and soil conditions must be established if the landscaping project is to be successful.

In addition, the ongoing care and management of the landscaping must be considered. Green spaces within residential schemes are ideal for tree planting schemes, especially where the private gardens are small or roadside margins are absent. Guidance on the choice of tree, shrub or other plant species and after care can be found in the section entitled 'Green Spaces and Landscaping'.

ESTATE SIGNAGE, ENTRANCES AND STREET FURNITURE

Each residential estate should be easily identifiable with a high visibility name plate or sign. The estate name should be bi-lingual and ideally reflect local heritage. It must also be maintained to a high standard. Locator maps for roads within large estates should feature at entrances and these should also be signposted from the town / village centre. Careful consideration needs to be given to the installation of litter bins and public seating at sites which will afford the most benefit to residents. Frequent emptying and maintenance of local litter bins is crucial if these are to be effective in addressing litter problems.



LINKS TO TOWN CENTRE AND FACILITIES

Footpaths from residential estates to the centre and community facilities such as schools, churches, community halls and sporting facilities should be maintained in a good state of repair and be sufficiently wide to accommodate baby buggies and wheelchairs without the need to step off onto the road. Cycle lanes need to be clearly marked and offer high visibility. Liaison with the Local Authority Area Engineer will be necessary.



CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Energy projects within estates should be considered – LED lighting in homes and in public areas and, where appropriate, solar powered lighting for features. On-site water harvesting for landscaped areas is invaluable. Solar powered litter bins might also be considered.



CHECKLIST FOR RESIDENT ASSOCIATIONS

- Are all properties well painted including gable walls and rear façades?
Is there a co-ordinated colour scheme?
- Are roadside boundary walls in a good state of repair and freshly cleaned or painted?
- Do residents take responsibility for areas immediately outside of their roadside boundary walls?
- Is there a Best Kept Garden or Best Kept Estate Competition?
Are there many instances of untidy gardens / private open space?
- Do private gardens and estates engage in local wildlife habitat awareness and protection by the installation of bird bat and owl boxes? Has a local survey been undertaken within the estates?
- Are Public Communal Open Spaces / Green Areas adequate for community needs?
Do they feature children's play equipment and if so is it well maintained?
- Do communal green areas provide for a range of community amenity activities and initiatives such as Grow Your Own, Community Orchards, Herb Gardens or Wildflower Meadows.
- Do any communal green areas allow the storage of pallets and/or green waste that may attract antisocial behaviour such as bonfires?
- Are native species chosen for landscaping?
- Has a tree /shrub survey been undertaken to establish existing species and condition?
- What is the purpose of the landscaping?
- Has site and soil conditions been explored in advance of landscaping and future management of the area?
- Does each estate have a visible name plate maintained to a high standard?
- Are nameplates bilingual and do names reflect local heritage?
- Do large estates feature locator maps for roads within and is signposting to the centre provided?
- Has consideration been given to the appropriate installation of street furniture such as litter bins, picnic benches and public seating?
- Have footpaths from residential estates to community facilities been provided and are these sufficiently wide and well maintained?
- Are cycle lanes clearly marked?
- Has a working relationship been established with the Local Authority's Area Engineer, Heritage Officer, Environmental Officer etc?
- Have energy-saving projects been considered for within estates together with on-site water harvesting for landscaped areas and solar powered litter bins and lighting?

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