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Communities in Bloom judges inspect Whitecourt's beauty, growth in 2024 provincials

'We've seen some beautiful things in your community, and the people of Whitecourt should be proud'

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On Monday (l-r), Chelsea Grande, Whitecourt community services director, Miranda McPhee, interim parks co-ordinator, and Kelly Sadoway, recreation manager, showed off Festival Park and the sportsfield master plan to Communities in Bloom judges Sherry and Bob Cote. Whitecourt volunteers and councillors toured with the judges around town for the provincial competition. PHOTO BY BRAD QUARIN

Whitecourt was put to the test this week, as part of the provincial Communities in Bloom (CiB) competition.

Judges Sherry and Bob Cote from Bruderheim, Alta. toured the Town of Whitecourt on Monday, accompanied by volunteers and Whitecourt councillors and staff.

"We've seen some beautiful things in your community, and the people of Whitecourt should be really proud," Sherry told the *Whitecourt Star*.





At Heritage Park (l-r), Carmyn Gibson, Whitecourt Communities in Bloom (CiB) volunteer, Sherry and Bob Cote, provincial CiB judges, Ann Blackwell, Whitecourt CiB volunteer, and Jeannine Steinke, Whitecourt CiB chairperson, toured the gardens. PHOTO BY BRAD QUARIN

“There is so much offered here in terms of recreation, and we see growth, development and amazing gardens.

“One thing I can say about the community is that I’ve never run into such enthusiastic volunteers and people committed to their community.”

CiB is a non-profit that rates communities between one and five blooms based on criteria of community appearance, environmental initiatives, heritage conservation, tree management, landscape and plant displays.

This year, the judges visited many of Whitecourt’s landmarks, including Festival Park and the adjacent Culture and Events Centre construction site.

“The park is quite impressive,” Bob told the *Star*.

“It’s very interactive, the kids can have a lot of fun here and it all looks very safe – that’s very important.”

Seeing the culture centre being built has some relevance to CiB, as Bob said that demonstrates Whitecourt’s growth.

Bob said he’d seen Festival Park about 10 years ago, when it was named Rotary Park. He said the park boasts more features now.

The Cotes saw other amenities, including the Allan and Jean Millar Centre, Eastlink Park, the Whitecourt Golf and Country Club and the Forest Interpretive Centre and Heritage Park.

Sherry told the *Star* seeing the recreational facilities and the inclusive programming was a highlight of the tour.

Regarding heritage conservation, Sherry said natural heritage is important.

“It’s all about what was here before you and how you’re preserving that, and we’ve seen lots of evidence of what Whitecourt is trying to do,” she said.

Sherry said she previously served as a judge in Whitecourt about 10 years ago, and there’s been a significant change since then.

“The community has blossomed, and even in the facilities I’ve seen, they’ve expanded the programming and there are new things added around them,” she said.

An example is the pickleball courts which were established by volunteers in

An example is the procedural courts, which were established by volunteers in 2021.

Jeannine Steinke, Whitecourt CiB chairperson, told the *Whitecourt Star* that it was nice to highlight the town's features that the volunteers are proud of.

The local CiB has a "core group" of about five members, with Steinke adding that there are additional volunteers who participate in planting and cleanups.

"We're always looking for more volunteers," Steinke said.

She said aspiring volunteers can call the Millar Centre and ask for Kelly Sadoway.

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