

Morro Bay – A Story of Cooperation and Celebration

By Walter Heath, Morro Bay in Bloom



The effect of the City of Morro Bay, California’s participation in the America in Bloom program is lot like the effect of Professor Harold Hill’s arrival in the mythical town of River City, Iowa in Meredith Wilson’s *The Music Man*. In that beloved American musical, Prof. Hill’s charm cajoled the townspeople into cooperating and celebrating their strengths. The benefit of America in Bloom is the realization that, in order to succeed in the program, communities have to pull together.



The process of identifying, during the compilation of our first [“Community Profile,”](#) all of the good things that residents are already making happen was illuminating for all the constituent groups of our community. City staff, the business community, civic groups and, specifically, art, civic-beautification and heritage-preservation groups became aware of existing investments of time and energy in our community. The information facilitates understanding that informs our city’s annual goals-and-objectives setting process.



A group of stakeholders in civic beautification, environmental, art and heritage preservation meet regularly to formulate a list of unmet needs that is submitted for review at annual public goals-setting workshops with city staff and city council. The current America in Bloom judges’ evaluation is used to develop the list. Some items on the unmet needs list are

budgeted for completion during the upcoming fiscal year. As a result of public scrutiny during the workshops, aspirational items are prioritized.



As with Professor Hill’s “think system,” the America in Bloom program has provided Morro Bay an opportunity to discover what’s possible for our community and to celebrate what we have. We have

learned that Morro Bay’s heritage is primarily cultural and tied throughout the ages to human interaction with our beautiful natural setting. As one of the last authentic small beach communities in California, understanding our special qualities informs the choices we make to shape our future.

