



# Community Improvement & Clean Up Ideas

Keep Iowa Beautiful   
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KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE



Cleaning up your town pays off

*Improvements to your community provide a win-win to everyone. From a renewed sense of pride among residents to creating a great first impression to visitors, any efforts toward clean up and community improvement serve to reinvigorate and set a standard for the future generations.*

## **Building Stronger Communities Developing Sustainable Futures**

- **Organize clean-up events.** Partner with various service clubs, organizations, church groups, youth groups to coordinate clean-up efforts in your community.
- **Establish an “Adopt” program.** Develop criteria for adopting streets, parks, trails, rivers or streams or other public facilities by individuals, clubs, organizations, and business.
- **Helping hands clean-up crews.** Organize teams to aid senior citizens, disadvantaged or disabled members of your community in home, property, or yard clean up.
- **Promote litter-free communities.** Work with local high-traffic public facilities like public libraries, auto dealers and service stations to hand out litter prevention materials at parks, business locations, stores, and other public locations or events. Work with the city officials to develop litter-free guidelines for city-permit events.

- **April is Keep Iowa Beautiful month.** Organize business- or chamber of commerce-led litter clean up days during the month. Appeal to local businesses to donate trash bags, rubber gloves and other items. Connect with the local landfill authority and waste collectors to move bagged material to landfills or recycling



centers. Pass a proclamation in support of April as Keep Iowa Beautiful month and identify what you are going to do to make your community better.

- **Walk to end litter.** Encourage local walker groups to become “waste-watchers” and to pick up litter along their routes; by doing so you help support their personal health and the health of the community. Work with local community publications to share the idea with the public.



- **Look local.** Identify local buildings, public spaces and facilities that may have been victim of graffiti. Organize a team and target those eye sores with soap, water, cover-up paint, or steam cleaning and remove the mess.
- **Go Dutch.** Designate a street-cleaning day using leaf blowers, sweeping tools, and lots of helpful hands to do as the Dutch do...street sweep. Include sidewalks and public spaces in your sweeping.
- **Consider your front entrance.** Entry points to your city or town can impact how people perceive your community. Replace faded signage, clean up those that are over grown with weeds or trim back shrubs that block signs, spruce up painted signs with a fresh coat for lettering and even give street poles a fresh coat of paint.
- **Back alley brigade.** These back streets are classic areas for litter to collect and they can look scary to newcomers. Adopt these areas of town and plan quarterly clean up days to improve these often dark and dirty spaces or even consider making these places surprising places for mural art.

- **Overgrown in overtime.** Vacant parking lots, public fence lines, and parks can fall victim to the growing season. Work with local gardeners to weed out the unwanted greenery of these spaces using shovels to dig up especially healthy weeds, trimmers and weed killer to thwart the regrowth. July is a good month to address weeds before they get too far out of control in your community
- **Painting it pretty.** Conduct an audit of buildings and facilities in the community that need painting. Consider buildings, fences, fire hydrants, benches, and park facilities in your audit. Develop a timeline for addressing each. Enlist local students, organization, and businesses to participate in a Bring Your Brush day to tackle your timeline. Contact local paint and hardware stores for donations. Plan ahead and apply for the “Paint Iowa Beautiful Program” sponsored by Diamond Vogel Paint.
- **Fixing it up in style.** Sometimes it takes more than a coat of paint to improve our communities; some projects require hard work and maintenance. Work with a team to identify these items like sagging fences, broken garbage receptacles, benches that need new wood, or signage that needs repair. Work with local lumber yards for supply donations and even local trade unions to work alongside volunteers to give guidance. Local high schools might be a great source for service learning through the building of birdhouses, trash receptacles, park benches and more.
- **Beautify with more green.** Develop a beautification plan for the community and work with your local plant nurseries for free or low cost materials. Contact the State Forester, County Conservation Board or your local Trees Forever representative about tree planting and planning for your community. Involve local service and garden clubs to help implement community beautification plans.



- **Greenspaces and places.** Plantings can have a naturally good effect on pride people feel about their community. Check in and work with local hospitals and retirement care facilities to develop special gardens or plant groupings that will appeal to patients and residents.
- **Growing a school garden.** Help students, teachers, administrators, and the community understand how they can cultivate their own food by planning and starting a school garden.
- **Remove the invasive and go native.** Contact the Iowa, county and city Department(s) of Transportation regarding the potential of obtaining grass and native flower seed for streets, country roads and highways in your community. Contact the Iowa Department of Transportation about roadside improvement programs and grants.
- **Out with the old.** Work with the city and public works to offer residents a haul away day once a year for large-sized items, carpeting and lumber to be collected and recycled or disposed.
- **Slightly worn.** Host a drop-off event where lightly worn clothing can be recycled and distributed to organizations such as social services can distribute to those in need.
- **Pull tabs for charity.** Pop Tab Collection Program is a small way to make a big difference to families with hospitalized children. By collecting pop tabs and donating to the nearest Ronald McDonald House, your community can help offset the expenses and allow families free overnight stays during a tough time.

*Help us add to this list.  
Let us know about your ideas for  
improving your community.*



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