

TIPS FOR A GOOD TOUR

One of the most unique and popular features of America in Bloom is the guided tour the community provides for the visiting Advisors. The purpose of the tour is to give the Advisors an on-site, thorough understanding of the efforts of the municipality, businesses, and residents in the seven criteria. Here are some tips to help you prepare for the tour to best showcase your community.

Preparing for the Tour

Some communities have a lead tour guide, while others have different guides who handle different tour segments. Either way works fine.

Have one to three people tour with the Advisors at any given time to limit social distractions so everyone can focus.

The sites you visit should pertain to the criteria. The tour should provide a good representation of all areas of your community. Plan for refreshment and washroom breaks.

The tour should not begin too early or end too late in the day. Generally, do not begin before 8 AM or go after 5 PM. Allow time for the Advisors to freshen up before dinner.

Use meals as an opportunity for Advisors to meet knowledgeable people. Have Advisors sit apart at meals so they can interact with more people.

At the start of the tour, provide a brief review of the itinerary and description of the events that will occur during the visit. A local map with the route highlighted helps orient the Advisors.

Introduce everyone, including their titles or positions. Name tags which with this information are very helpful. Provide to the Advisors a complete list of the people they will meet, including name, title/position, and email.

If possible, do a dry run of the tour and remember to allow extra time for questions and discussion. Please the tour takes longer than you anticipate it will. Build some buffer time into your tour.

Prioritize tour stops. Be prepared to delete lower priority stops if the tour runs late.

During the Tour

While driving between stops, tell the Advisors about the next stop and who they will meet.

If you have participated in past years, mention changes made since previous visit. Making a list for the Advisors is helpful for you and for them.

Resource people can ride with the Advisors or be met at different stops. It is important to include resource people involved in the seven criteria, such as a parks department employee, arborist, historian, volunteers, etc.

People on the tour should be able to answer questions or find answers.

Be sure the Advisors can see out the windows. It is better to allow one Advisor to sit in the front seat. Make sure both Advisors can hear the conversation. A van or SUV is better than a sedan.

The tour should remain within the city limits unless a site is maintained by the city, such as a recycling center, or is considered by most residents as being a part of the city, such as ball fields or a conference center. State parks outside city limits, maintained by the state, should not be part of the tour.

Inform the Advisors if an event is a social event or a venue where presentations will be given. The Advisors are glad to speak to large or small groups.

If possible, have a local newspaper reporter or other media rep join the tour for a short time. Take some photos and submit an article to the local paper during or after the tour.

A short wrap up session at the end of the tour is helpful to allow the Advisors to ask any remaining questions.

Provide at least three consecutive hours for the Advisors to work on their evaluations after the tour is over and before they leave town. The tour should end by 3 PM on the second day. This point cannot be stressed enough! It is important that the Advisors have time to work on the evaluation while they are in your community.