# City of McAllen

McAllen, TX

Major Javier Villalobos

## Pledge Summary

The City of McAllen is a city in south Texas with a population of roughly 142,000. It is the largest city in Hidalgo County of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, a region known for its high biodiversity and as an ecotourism destination. Mayor Javier Villalobos of McAllen, Texas has committed to conserving the monarch butterfly and the pollinator community that are so important to ecosystem and economic health. Mayor Villalobos looks forward to engaging residents and creating more pollinator habitat in the city.

## Action Items Committed for 2024

### Communications and Convening

- Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.
- Launch or maintain a public communication effort to encourage residents to plant monarch gardens at their homes or in their neighborhoods. (If you have community members who speak a language other than English, we encourage you to also communicate in that language; Champion Pledges must communicate in that language.)
- Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Nature Centers, Native Plant Society Chapters , other long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.

### Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.
- Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.
- Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.
- Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.
- Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.
- Host or support a monarch butterfly festival that is accessible to all residents in the community and promotes monarch and pollinator conservation, as well as cultural awareness and recognition.
- Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

## Past Pledge Archive

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| Mayor Name | Program Year | Pledge Date | Achievement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mayor Javier Villalobos | 2026 | 12/2/2025 | |
| Mayor Javier Villalobos | 2025 | 12/10/2024 | Leadership Circle |
| Major Javier Villalobos | 2024 | 1/11/2024 | Leadership Circle |
| Mayor Javier Villalobos | 2023 | 3/30/2023 | Leadership Circle |
| Mayor Javier Villalobos | 2022 | 4/19/2022 | Leadership Circle |
| Mayor Jim Darling | 2021 | 3/19/2021 | Leadership Circle |

## Action Items

**In total, how many individuals have been reached through the Mayors' Monarch Pledge in your community this year (Jan-Dec)? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field below (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only.).**

13784

**Of the total number of individuals engaged, how many youth (0-18) were reached through the Mayors' Monarch Pledge in your community this year (Jan. - Dec.)? If none, please write 0." (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only.)**

1939

**In total, how many acres of monarch habitat have been created in your city in the last 12 months? Please limit your answer to only the number of acres in the answer field below (e.g., 3). Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.**

1.75

**Where was the habitat created this year? Example locations may include residences, schools, places of worship, rights-of-way, roadsides, community gardens, shared public spaces, and more.**

Parks, roadside habitats, McAllen City Hall, along with residences (via plants sold and/or given away).

**How are you leveraging the Mayors' Monarch Pledge program to engage marginalized communities, such as low-income communities or communities of color?**

91% of City of McAllen residents are people of color and 46% are considered to be in poverty. Engaging with our community at large through educational programming and habitat creation projects ensures that we are connecting and impacting the lives of folks in marginalized communities.

**What was your community's motivation for taking and continuing to work on the Mayors' Monarch Pledge?**

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We continue to want to encourage the people of McAllen to support ecosystem health for the benefit of people and wildlife.

**What resources have been most helpful to you thus far and what new resources would you like to see to help meet your goals? What resources would be useful to help expand equitable engagement in community processes and access to high-quality, usable nature?**

NWF website, from plant finder to this portal, have been useful.

**What else should we know about your monarch butterfly conservation efforts over the last year?**

Our Monarch butterfly conservation efforts extend out into multiple programs across the City of McAllen, including direct habitat creation projects via wildflower meadows, Tiny Forests, urban forests, tree plantings, and garden plantings at city parks. In terms of programming and outreach, we weave conservation messages into much of our ongoing programs and events and emphasize actions that our community can take to improve the environment for wildlife, including birds, butterflies (including specifically monarchs), and other pollinators.

## Selected Action Items

### Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

2024 March river rock bed.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Mayor Villalobos at City Hall Garden.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

McAllen Staff Planting the Garden.jpg

**Where is the demonstration garden located and how does this location relate to the cultural significance of the monarch (if relevant)? (Please provide an address or coordinates, if possible)**

At McAllen City Hall (1300 W Houston Ave, McAllen, TX 78501)

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**What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?**

City of McAllen interdepartmental collaboration of McAllen Parks & Recreation, with funding from a National Wildlife Federation grant (facilitated by Rebeca Quiñonez-Piñón).

**What is the size of the demonstration garden (in acres)? Please limit your answer to only the number of acres in the answer field below (e.g., 0.5 acres ). For reference, 1 acre = 43,560 square feet and is about the size of a football field without the end zones. Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.**

0.07

## Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Zizote sign.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

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**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

PXL_20241129_183312807.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

PXL_20241129_183225651.jpg

**How many garden signs are being displayed and where are they located? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)**

4

**Please describe the educational information on the sign(s), and provide any links to externally purchased sign(s).**

The signs provide information about the lifecycle of the Monarch buttefly and the importance of providing milkweed as a host plant, along with information on their migration from the United States into Mexico. Other signs also provide information about the importance of host and nectar plants for butterflies as a whole, along with encouraging visitors to remove sections of lawn and installing native plants to support butterflies,

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pollinators, and other wildlife. We also have a NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat sign prominently displayed at our Front Garden.

## Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

example observation 1a.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

example observation 1b.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

life stage overview.jpg

**How many estimated individuals participated in your community science effort? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only, e.g. 150).**

881

**What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?**

Center for Urban Ecology at Quinta Mazatlan, partnering with the City Nature Challenge organizers.

**Please describe the community science program that you supported or initiated. Provide a link to any relevant programs, if possible.**

We continue to curate iNaturalist observations of Monarch butterflies in the Rio Grande Valley by adding lifecycle annotations and nectar plant and host plant observation fields (see attached images of examples). As of writing this report, all 1,372 observations of Monarch butterflies in the Rio Grande Valley have life stage annotations. We also are the co-organizers of the City Nature Challenge for the Rio Grande Valley, which encourages residents to get out and explore the nature in our urban region. While typically the number of monarch observations is low during the CNC period (late April & early May, only 3 observations of monarchs this year), the effort of folks participating is high. This year we have over 750 people making observations and adding identifications over the four day bioblitz. View our report at the link below.
https://cuefornature.wordpress.com/2024/05/11/city-nature-challenge-2024-report/

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## Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.

**Date of Proclamation:**

3/25/2024

**Title of Proclamation (i.e. – Monarch Day or Pollinator Week):**

Mayors' Monarch Pledge Day

**Upload a copy of your proclamation.**

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## Launch or maintain a public communication effort to encourage residents to plant monarch gardens at their homes or in their neighborhoods. (If you have community members who speak a language other than English, we encourage you to also communicate in that language; Champion Pledges must communicate in that language.)

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Growing Pollinator Friendly Habitats – Center for Urban Ecology.pdf

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Supporting Migratory Monarch Butterflies – Center for Urban Ecology.pdf

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Milkweed Propagation 10-5-2024.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Annotation 2024-11-29 100448.jpg

**Please describe the methods of public communication below (e.g., printed materials, social media, print media).**

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Quinta Mazatlan continues to share monarch and pollinator-friendly gardening information with our guests and social media followers. We provide NWF habitat creation hand-outs and a recommended list of native plants at our reception, available for all guests to freely take. We also write blog posts, share information on social media, have a guest presentation by Dr. Douglas Tallamy available on our YouTube Page, and incorporate monarch and pollinator conservation messaging into our programs and events. See the attachments for further information on events, programs, and resources that include monarch-friendly practices for our community.

## Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Nature Centers, Native Plant Society Chapters , other long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Planta Nativa Social 2024 (65).jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Monarch Butterfly Conservation.png

**How many community organizations and groups participated? Please list them below.**

RGV Pollinator Project Native Plant Project Native Plant Society of Texas RGV Chapter

**Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and their monarch butterfly conservation efforts.**

RGV Pollinator Project: Gave a presentation at Quinta Mazatlan on Monarch Butterfly on 10/17/24 Native Plant Project: Coordinated a native plant seed giveaway at Planta Nativa on 10/24/24 (500+ seed packets). Native Plant Society of Texas RGV Chapter: Outreach at Planta Nativa on 10/24/24 We also, via the Center for Urban Ecology at Quinta Mazatlan, started a "Study in Wildflowers" pilot project where we are encouraging local residents to remove lawn by providing them with enough wildflower seeds (including Zizotes Milkweed) to fill 200 sq. feet of space.

## Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.

**How many plants were sold and/or given away at your event? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)**

682

**How many people attended your event? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)**

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1375

**What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to host the event?**

Center for Urban Ecology at Quinta Mazatlan, Heep's Native Plant Nursery, La Floresta Plant Nursery, Catarina Miranda Plant Grower. We hosted plant giveaways and sales at numerous events over the course of the reporting period, including Monarch Morning, ReFest, Planta Nativa, Hummingbird Morning, seasonal plant sales, workshops, and a plant giveaway during our Native Plant Month. The estimate is conservative.

## Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

seed collecting photo.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Milkweed Propagation 10-5-2024.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

Ziztoes radicle 2024.jpg

**How many people attended your event? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)**

289

**What species were collected or propagated?**

Zizotes Milkweed (Asclepias oenotheroides)

**What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to host the event?**

RGV Pollinator Project, the Native Plant Project, and the Center for Urban Ecology at Quinta Mazatlan.

**Please describe the milkweed seed collection and propagation effort that you hosted.**

We included information and seeds from milkweeds at several of our workshops, along with actively collecting milkweed seeds and distributing them to people and seeding them in wildflower habitats in the City of McAllen. We collected over 2,750 zizotes seeds from individuals growing at Quinta Mazatlan and at roadside Tiny Forests in McAllen.

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Additionally, the RGV Pollinator Project gave away milkweeds and milkweed seeds at their presentation, as did the Native Plant Project at our Planta Nativa event in October.

## Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

IMG_2077.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

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**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

PXL_20241130_150340561.jpg

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

PXL_20241130_150402606.PORTRAIT.jpg

**Where are the medians, roadsides and public rights-of-way? (Please provide an address or coordinates, if possible, or describe the location)**

https://maps.app.goo.gl/3ATe5Gdr6zVaYqtMA

**How many milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants were planted? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)**

250

**What is the total acreage of median and public right-of-way that has been planted with milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants? Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.**

.15

**Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.**

We planted a combination of sections of perennial plants (Xylosma flexuosa, Phyla nodiflora, Melochia tomentosa, Adelia vaseyi, Lippia origanoides, Cylindropuntia leptocaulis) along with seeded a new roadside wildflower meadow section in that area of

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annual wildflowers (e.g. Gaillardia pulchella, Verbesina encelioides, Ratibida columnifera, etc.). The perennial areas will just undergo seasonal maintenance to make sure they don't get overrun by invasive grasses. The wildflower area will be delineated with a "no mow" sign and only mowed 1-2 times a year, after the wildflowers have gone to seed.

## Host or support a monarch butterfly festival that is accessible to all residents in the community and promotes monarch and pollinator conservation, as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

**Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.**

monarach morning.jpg

**How many estimated individuals attended the event? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field ((Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only), e.g. 500)**

220

**What was the date of your festival?**

4/6/2024

**What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?**

Quinta Mazatlan

**Please describe the details of your monarch butterfly festival and how you ensured the event was accessible by all residents in the community (e.g., events, length, notable successes, outreach, location).**

We hosted Monarch Morning on April 6, 2024. The event featured youth/scout activities, garden tours, a native plant sale, STEM activities for kids, and a gardening for wildlife presentation. During the event we focused on educating folks about butterfly migration, the value of native plants for pollinators, and the importance of milkweeds for the monarch butterfly.

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