City of Cedar Rapids

Cedar Rapids, IA

Cedar Rapids Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell

Pledge Summary

The Cedar Rapids Parks Department is an advocate for native plantings, prairies, and pollinator zones. We are actively increasing the number of each and are committed to this initiative. We continue to educate our staff and pursue partnerships that can aid all involved in such an endeavor.

Action Items Committed for 2025

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

Communications and Convening

- Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.
- Engage with developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell	2026	2/25/2026	
Cedar Rapids Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell	2025	12/2/2024	Signatories
Cedar Rapids Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell	2024	4/29/2024	Leadership Circle
Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell	2022	4/29/2022	Signatories
Cedar Rapids Mayor Brad Hart	2021	3/25/2021	Signatories

Action Items

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.

16.5

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

Pollinators play a critical role in maintaining diverse ecosystems. The decline of pollinators is striking, with some estimates putting today’s population of monarchs at less than 5 percent of the population 15 years ago. Pollinators contribute to the production of more than 30 percent of our food and increase that value of nations’ crops by $15 million dollars. Located in a heavily agricultural state, and a City that thrives because of the agricultural sector, the City has committed to several initiative to support the environment.

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?

We have been through another period of transition in the Parks Department (the primary department engaged in this effort), so a review of the goals and benefits of participating in the Mayor’s Monarch Pledge would be helpful.

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.).

684

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.

The CR Parks and Recreation Department has been creating pollinator habitat in an urban setting. The first prairies were installed more than 10 years ago along the trail system. Since then, the City has also committed to the Pollinator Zone program, 1000 acre pollinator initiative, and Prairies in Parks. In addition, within planning documents, including the Garden in Parks Plan, prairie and pollinator habitat is integrated into the designs. Community members are encouraged to plant native plants and pollinator habitats in their yards. City staff provide guidance on planting prairies that align with City protocols that ensure road visibility and accessible walkways.

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

During the development of the Garden in Parks Program and Nature Everywhere implementation plan, low-income communities were on the criteria used to determine priority locations.

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.)

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350

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

Our monarch conservation efforts have slowed over the past year due to staff turnover but with a new Parks Superintendent, we should regain our momentum.

Selected Action Items

Engage with developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.

Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and associated opportunities to create monarch habitat.

The City of Cedar Rapids has engaged community partners, including the Cedar Rapids Community School District and the Indian Creek Nature Center, through the Nature Everywhere Communities initiative launched in fall 2024. This program promotes equitable access to nature and environmental education by developing green schoolyards. In March 2025, City staff gathered input from students on playgrounds, outdoor recreation, and their interactions with nature. In April 2025, staff engaged residents at EcoFest, the annual Earth Month celebration, to discuss stormwater management, nature-based playgrounds, and outdoor classrooms. In total, 684 participants provided feedback. Children emphasized the importance of nature play areas, outdoor learning opportunities, increased tree canopy, and access to flowers and natural spaces. These priorities inform future park development and present opportunities to incorporate pollinator-friendly landscapes and monarch habitat into community spaces.

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

Nature Everywhere Community Input Newsletter.pdf

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

Nature Everywhere Engagement PowerPoint.pdf

Create a community art project to enhance and promote 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.

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2025 City of Cedar Rapids Garbage and Recycling Truck Art Pulbic Art webpage narrative.pdf

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

The City of Cedar Rapids, IA Solid Waste and Recycling Division_ A Culture of Commitment - Waste Advantage Magazine.pdf

Please describe the community art project that was implemented in your community and how it contributed to cultural awareness and recognition (e.g., number of art installations, type of art).

In March 2025, three recycling trucks and two garbage trucks rolled out onto the streets to showcase new public artwork. The initiative, part of the city's Public Art Plan, centered on the theme of sustainable neighborhoods inspired by the Community Climate Action Plan. Two of the truck designs highlight prairie pollinators, while all five pieces were created by Iowa-native artists in collaboration with the Cedar Rapids Community School District. Twenty-seven local high school students also contributed to the project.

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

Cedar Rapids Community School District, Cedar Rapids Solid Waste, 5 Local Artists: Erykah Danner (Cedar Rapids), Drew Etienne (Cedar Rapids), Harper Folsom (Cedar Rapids), Chris Sullivan (Des Moines), Paxton Williams (Cedar Rapids).

How many individuals were engaged in this effort? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only, e.g. 50).

35

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

10

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

The City has installed educational signs at restored prairies in Noelridge and Hughes Parks and in the native gardens at Noelridge. These signs explain why native plants are beneficial and highlight the pollinators that are associated with them.

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

Cedar Rapids Butterfly Sign.jpg

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

Prairie Pollinator Sign.jpg

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