

Town of Normal

Normal, IL

Mayor Chris Koos

Pledge Summary

The Town of Normal, home of Illinois State University, is located in Central Illinois. The northern two-thirds of the state was originally covered by prairie land. And while Illinois is known as "The Prairie State," most of the state's prairies are gone as the majority were converted to agricultural fields. The monarch butterfly, the state insect, had lived on these prairies. Milkweed and other flowering plants are needed to help restore the lost prairie habitat. The Town of Normal is committed to preserving and restoring native prairie plantings that serves both as an aesthetic and recreational amenity while providing wildlife habitat, especially for the monarch butterfly.

Action Items Committed for 2025

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.
- Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.
- Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Chris Koos	2026	1/7/2026	
Mayor Chris Koos	2025	1/10/2025	Signatories
Mayor Chris Koos	2024	1/10/2024	Signatories
Mayor Chris Koos	2023	1/12/2023	Signatories
Mayor Chris Koos	2022	2/25/2022	Signatories
Mayor Chris Koos	2021	3/30/2021	Signatories

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 (e.g., 50).

156300

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." (Only allow numerical values.)

4199

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).

1.5

Where is your habitat being created? This may include residences (yards, containers, balconies, etc.), schools, places of worship, rights-of-way, roadsides, community gardens, culturally-significant locations, shared public spaces and common areas or parks.

Native habitat within the Town of Normal has primarily been created on public lands managed by the Parks & Recreation Department, that include park areas, trail right-of-way and other municipal property, as well as the medians within the central business district (Uptown Normal). The Town has also added native plantings to detention basin shorelines and restored creek banks throughout the community.

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

The Town of Normal efforts to increase native and/or butterfly habitats are focused throughout the community. In 2025, the Normal Public Library added a pollinator habitat near its south entrance. Programming through the Children's Discovery Museum, Illinois Art Station, and the Parks & Recreation Department has focused on pollinator-related education. These entities all serve families of lower socio-economic status and communities of color.

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

The Town has long been and remains committed to environmental sustainability. The Town adopted a Vision 2050/Sustainability Plan last year. In 2025, a 15-member cross-functional internal committee met monthly to set goals tied to the priorities outlined in the plan and to establish baseline date. These priorities align with the goal to expand natural habitats and pollinator plantings across many Town venues and parks, including the Normal Public Library. Also, this year, the Town earned a Bird City Illinois designation, becoming only the eleventh city in the state of Illinois to be recognized with this designation and the first downstate. As part of the designation, Normal was recognized for its efforts to ensure native habitats exist in the community for birds and pollinators. The Town has been certified as a Tree City USA community since 1999 and takes great pride in this effort, as well as the Mayor's Monarch Pledge. The Town partners with the Grand Prairie Bird Alliance on

birds talks at area parks and regularly provides bird and pollinator related education, information, and photography to the public and Town staff.

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?

The Town has utilized resources acquired from various sources, including Stantec Environmental Consulting Services and local landscape management companies. The Parks & Recreation horticulture staff annually attend various landscape management workshops, including InvigorateU which is held every January in Normal.

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

The Town continued its effort to enhance a native habitat area around a recently installed water feature located near the Constitution Trail. The Town also continues to provide accessible birdwatching locations, with the most popular areas being the Bird Sanctuary Natural Area, the Hidden Creek Nature Sanctuary and the Children's and Elders Forest in Maxwell Park. The Town built a new fire station in 2025 that includes bird-friendly windows and features many nectar-producing perennial plants in its respective landscaping. Normal's Children Discovery Museum worked with a local Future Farmers of America school club to plant the Museum's "Dig It" outdoor exhibit which included pollinator-friendly plants. The Museum also facilitates programs with Master Gardener/Naturalist volunteers by using outdoor space for hands-on pollinator education. Next year, the museum will install a new specialty crop and pollinator themed exhibit. The Town follows model ordinances to protect native vegetation and uses stormwater best management practices for managing detention basins and stream buffers. This approach was created collaboratively with the McLean County Ecology Action Center, Illinois State University, and Stantec Environmental Consulting Services. The Town, along with the Ecology Action Center and ISU, have identified mutually beneficial opportunities for meaningful student involvement by allowing students to utilize area creeks, detention basins, ditches, and streams as living laboratories to collect data about local vegetation, pollinators, insects and other wildlife.

Selected Action Items

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.

[Plant Invoices.pdf](#)

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

[Allers #1.jpg](#)

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

[Allers #2.jpg](#)

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

The Town's Parks & Recreation horticulture staff continued work on the Allers Shelter Natural Area and Bird Sanctuary project, that is situated along the Constitution Trail and the Connie Link Amphitheater in South Normal. The project involved the transformation of a small, wooded area into a natural habitat to attract songbirds, hummingbirds, bees, butterflies, and other wildlife and insects. Native plant material was blended into a flowing and ponded water feature highlighted with natural stone outcropping. Many of the woody plants, that include buttonbush, coralberry, and spicebush, were planted in 2024. This season, a multitude of perennials were planted, many of which are nectar-producing pollinator-friendly plants, such as coreopsis, echinacea, monarda, rudbeckia, and eupatorium.

How many milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants were planted?

1814

What is the total acreage of median and public right-of-way that has been planted with milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants?

1.5

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

The entire planting project was completed this year in the late fall. The plants were mulched and adequately watered in prior to the anticipated colder weather. Some of the plants, that are desirable to rabbits, were protected with mesh cages. Next season, the plants will be watered as needed to guarantee their establishment.

Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.

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

[Underwood 2022.jpg](#)

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

[Underwood burn.jpeg](#)

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

[Underwood 2025.jpeg](#)

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

Stantec Environmental Consulting Services assisted Town horticulture staff in acquiring the needed certifications for conducting prescribed burns.

How many plants were planted?

0

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

In 2021, the Town's Parks & Recreation horticulture staff transformed approximately 1.5 acres of mowed turfgrass and planted a native prairie. Prior to the Town acquiring the property as an addition to Underwood Park along the Constitution Trail in south Normal, the area was utilized for many years as a horse pasture. Unfortunately, the initial transformation from turfgrass to prairie was somewhat unsuccessful. The native plants struggled to fully establish due to heavy competition from weed growth. The most troubling weed was tall fescue that was not adequately killed out prior to the initial planting. A prescribed burn was conducted on the prairie in late winter, prior to the spring green up. Selected chemical applications were then performed to help eradicate the unwanted weed growth. These actions resulted in a rejuvenated prairie with abundant growth that includes false sunflower, purple coneflower, and wild beebalm.

Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

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

[Hidden Creek sign.jpeg](#)

What is the total acreage of land treated to remove invasive plants?

2.5

Please describe the extent of revisions or maintenance to invasive species removal programs, as well as the practices or techniques used to remove the invasive plants.

The Town's Parks & Recreation horticulture and forestry staff continued work at the Hidden Creek Nature Sanctuary located along the Constitution Trail, north of Uptown Normal. An ecological restoration project at the 2.5-acre park begun in 2017 with the removal of invasive plant material, that heavily consisted of Bush Honeysuckle, Tree of Heaven, Buckthorn, and Mulberry. Work continued with the planting of a mixture of native plants including Black-Eyed Susan, Swamp Milkweed, and Beardtongue. Unfortunately, a resurgence of invasive woody plants invaded much of the park. This fall, all of the invasive plants were cut and removed throughout the entire park and all stumps were treated to prevent regrowth. Admittedly, the resurgence of invasive plants was partly due to staff's attention on other projects. Next year, staff will perform a prescribed burn to the park area.