City of Des Moines

Des Moines, IA

Mayor T.M. Franklin Cownie

Pledge Summary

The City of Des Moines is Iowa's capitol and is the core of one of the fastest growing metro areas in the Midwest. Des Moines is a beautiful city located in the heart of the fall Monarch Migration route. The local government serves more than 215,000 residents throughout 52 neighborhoods with more than 4,000 acres of parkland. Mayor Cownie has committed to conservation and sustainability practices that enhance our city as well as provide habitat for monarch butterflies, pollinators and wildlife in our city.

Action Items Committed for 2021

Communications and Convening

- 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 city parks and recreation, public works, sustainability, and other relevant staff to identify opportunities to revise and maintain mowing programs and milkweed / native nectar plant planting programs.
- 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.
- Engage with Homeowners Associations (HOAs), Community Associations or neighborhood organizations to identify opportunities to plant monarch gardens and revise maintenance and mowing programs.
- Engage with developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.
- Create a community-driven educational conservation strategy, initiative, or practice that focuses on and benefits local, underserved residents.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- 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.
- Launch or maintain an outdoor education program(s) (e.g., at schools, after-school programs, community centers and groups) that builds awareness and creates habitat by

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engaging students, educators, and the community in planting native milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Schoolyard Habitats program and Monarch Mission curriculum).
- Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.
- 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.
- 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.

Systems Change

- Change weed or mowing ordinances to allow for native prairie and plant habitats.
- Integrate monarch butterfly conservation into the city's Park Master Plan, Sustainability Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan or other city plans.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Connie Boesen	2026	3/31/2026	
Mayor Connie Boesen	2025	4/8/2025	Leadership Circle
Mayor Connie Boesen	2024	3/28/2024	Leadership Circle
Mayor T.M. Franklin Cownie	2023	3/28/2023	Leadership Circle
Mayor T.M. Franklin Cownie	2022	3/22/2022	Leadership Circle
Mayor T.M. Franklin Cownie	2021	4/16/2021	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.).

2315

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.)

Youth 1621 Adults 485

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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.

0.3

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.

Yard gardens, containers, community gardens, Parks

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

Environmental Education is being scheduled into our new Equitable Program initiative.

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

The Mayors' Monarch Pledge was first brought up to the Mayer through the Blank Park Zoo along with the Parks and Recreation department. From that date we have all continued the mission to care for the natural areas and biodiversity in our city.

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?

Resources and staff to maintain and manage native areas that exist as well as expanding and creating new areas.

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

We continue to improve are native areas with more milkweed!

Selected Action Items

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.

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

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

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.

Create a community-driven educational conservation strategy, initiative, or practice that focuses on and benefits local, underserved residents.

Please describe the process to create the strategy , the strategy goals and content, and/or results of implementation. Please also identify who was engaged in this process, what partnerships were established, and how you engaged these groups. Provide a link, if possible.

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

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

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

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.

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

Change weed or mowing ordinances to allow for native prairie and plant habitats.

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

What is the status of this action? Please limit your answer to either "complete" or "in progress" in the answer field below.

If this action is Complete, please include the date it was completed and share a 1-2 sentence description. Please include a copy of the policy by uploading or linking below.

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If this action is In Progress, please describe your progress and a target date when you plan to complete action.

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.)

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

Short videos about Monarchs were released through social media. There was also a video produced as a set of directions for a joint project with the city Libraries. The project was a take home craft to make a seed ball using Iowa Native species of seeds during Covid restricted programming. There is also a Monarch video maintained in our social media and webpage.

Engage with city parks and recreation, public works, sustainability, and other relevant staff to identify opportunities to revise and maintain mowing programs and milkweed / native nectar plant planting programs.

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

Cohen Park Concept Plan-01.png

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

Parks and Recreation maintains no mow areas and well has done several Milkweed for Monarchs planting events where milkweed plants are added to native areas. Parks also worked with Public Works on designing a new stormwater retention area to be planted with native prairie species as part of the design.

Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and revisions/maintenance implemented for mowing or planting programs.

There were five groups that planted various species of milkweed in five different locations for the Milkweed for Monarch programs.

Engage with Homeowners Associations (HOAs), Community Associations or neighborhood organizations to identify opportunities to plant monarch gardens and revise maintenance and mowing programs.

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

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NA Flower Logo.pdf

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

47 Neighborhood Associations participated in the Neighborhood Flower Program

Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and revisions implemented for mowing and maintenance programs.

These groups order flowers from our greenhouse to plant in the neighborhood right-of-ways, libraries and schools. Included in the flower orders were Iowa natives Asclepias, Echinacea, Lobelia, Rudbeckia and Monarda fistulosa. The orders must contain at least 10% natives.

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

15

What species were collected or propagated?

Common milkweed, Butterfly milkweed Swamp milkweed and various other Iowa Native species

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

Des Moines Parks and Recreation

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

Parks and Recreation hosted 2 Prairie seed collections with volunteers. Seeds collected will be used either for propagation in the greenhouse or spread to different locations to increase diversity in our native areas.

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

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)

Gray's Lake Park, 2101 Fleur Dr, Des Moines, IA 50315

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

Des Moines Parks and Recreation

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.

0.01

Launch or maintain an outdoor education program(s) (e.g., at schools, after-school programs, community centers and groups) that builds awareness and creates habitat by engaging students, educators, and the community in planting native milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Schoolyard Habitats program and Monarch Mission curriculum).

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

Plant.Grow.Fly..JPG

What program was launched or maintained to complete this effort? If you are involved with another National Wildlife Federation program, please mention that below. (Please include a link to the program, if possible)

Plant.Grow.Fly. from the Blank Park Zoo, maintained

How many schools, community groups, leaders, or centers were engaged in this effort? How many of these collaborations and partnerships are "new"? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

1

Please list the names of the schools you are working with.

Johnston

What resources, if any, are you providing to educators?

Teacher workshop on pollinators

How many students and educators would you estimate are being reached? Please limit your answer to only number of adults and youths engaged in the answer field (e.g., 200 students and 20 educators).

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150

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

Iowa Realtor Association, Community Housing, Builders Association Expo

How many acres of monarch and pollinator habitat have been planted through this effort? 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.

0.25

What is the maintenance schedule to ensure planted habitat is maintained?

Private owners are responsible for their plantings.

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

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).

10

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

Des Moines Parks and Recreation

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

Parks hosted 2 small Bioblitz events to introduce the public to iNaturalist

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

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

Community Gardeners through Des Moines Parks and Recreation

How many plants were planted? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

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24

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

One garden plot in the community gardens is dedicated specifically to pollinator flowers and the community gardens that have plots at the locations take care of the pollinator plot.

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.

UPCYCLELOGO-PREFERRED.jpg

What is the total acreage of land treated to remove invasive plants? Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

15

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.

Volunteers pull invasive plants that are then upcycled to the Blank Park Zoo for animal enrichment. If woody vegetation is cut, is is also chemically treated. A local brewery that shares the property line sponsors the program.

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.

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)

1000

What was the date of your festival?

September 11, 2021

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

Blank park Zoo, Des Moines Parks and Recreation,

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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).

Annual event held hosted by the Blank Park Zoo. This year was a smaller event due to COVID but it was an in person invent. Blank Park Zoo partners with many local conservation groups and the Latino Festival for the event.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

Interpretive-Sign-Monarch-Butterfly-Life-Cycle-Egg-Caterpillar-Chrysalis-Adult-Metamorphosis-Migration-Pulse-Design-Nature-Series-11018.jpg

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

2

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

One at the community garden location. One at Grays Lake Park. Information includes the lifecycle of the monarch butterfly.

Integrate monarch butterfly conservation into the city's Park Master Plan, Sustainability Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan or other city plans.

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

Des Moines Parks and Recreation, Blank Park Zoo,

What is the status of this action? Please limit your answer to either "complete" or "in progress" in the answer field below.

in progress

If this action is In Progress, please describe your progress and a target date when you plan to complete action.

The master plan is a 15-20 year plan.

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