City of Des Moines

Des Moines, IA

Mayor T.M. Franklin Cownie

Pledge Summary

The City of Des Moines Iowa is in the heart of the Midwest and in the heart of the fall Monarch Migration flight way. The City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation along with the Blank Park Zoo, Science Center of Iowa, and Des Moines Botanical Center all work together to promote and provide support for Monarch Conservation in our city. Mayor Cownie has committed to conservation and sustainable practices that enhance our city as well as provide habitat for monarch butterflies, pollinators, and wildlife in our city.

Action Items Committed for 2023

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 community garden groups and urge them to plant native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants.
- 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 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

- 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.
- 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).
- Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation’s Community Wildlife Habitat program).
- 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.
- Launch, expand, or continue an effort to change municipal planting ordinances and practices to include more native milkweed and native nectar producing plants at city properties.
- Integrate monarch butterfly conservation into the city’s Park Master Plan, Sustainability Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan or other city plans.
- Launch, expand, or continue one or more ordinances to reduce light pollution to benefit urban wildlife.

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

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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.).

3000

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.)

1200 adult 1800 adult

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.

2

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.

Habitat is being created in private yards, public container, private containers, rights-of-ways, community gardens, at the state capitol grounds, and public parks.

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

We offer free programs at our public libraries and in our city parks. We work within our own Equity Program to do presentations at our camps.

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

There are several organizations within the City of Des Moines that all work together to make Des Moines a top city to live and work for individuals and families. Conservation and education of nature and wildlife are supported through the Blank Park Zoo, Des Moines Botanical Gardens, Science Center of Iowa and the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation department. The Mayors' Monarch Pledge is connected to all of these organizations.

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 guides have been helpful. Resources to expand and improve equitable programming and services in Des Moines will be helpful.

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

Dry weather conditions have been tough on keeping new plantings alive over the summer months.

Selected Action Items

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.

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

What species were collected or propagated?

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

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

Launch, expand, or continue one or more ordinances to reduce light pollution to benefit urban wildlife.

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.

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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.

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

Launch, expand, or continue an effort to change municipal planting ordinances and practices to include more native milkweed and native nectar producing plants at city properties.

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

Des Moines Parks and Recreation

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.

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

The office of the Mayor, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, City of Des Moines Sustainability, Blank Park Zoo, Des Moines Libraries and the Des Moines Botanical Gardens have all participated and collaborated on projects within the City of Des Moines.

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

The Mayor declared No Mow May for 2023. Parks and Recreation maintains no mow areas, hosts annual milkweed planting events, designs public storm water basins with native vegetation. Blank Park Zoo and the Des Moines Botanical Gardens have native plantings on their property. Parks uses burning for maintenance in native areas for managment of invasive species of plants.

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)

2536

What was the date of your festival?

August 26, 2023

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

Des Moines Parks and Recreation, Iowa Monarch Conservation, Ted Lare Garden Center, Des Moines Botanical Garden, Iowa Environmental Council, Jovenes Embajadores Latino Dancers

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).

The event as held at the Blank Park Zoo. Multiple educational booths and activities were stationed inside and outside the park. Other events that day included a costume parade and dance performances

Engage with community garden groups and urge them to plant native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants.

Please describe the groups you engaged with and how you engaged with these groups below.

Parks and Recreation has community gardens and as part of the agreement, gardeners maintain a plot full of milkweed and other native species as well a nectar- producing plants. There is a pollinator and butterfly sign that identifies the garden plot.

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.

Neighborhood flower program.png

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

40 Neighborhood Associations

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

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Annually, Neighborhood Associations order plants form the city greenhouse at no cost to their associations. The plant orders must conation at least 10% natives. The order forms have species information that shows pollinator friendly and host plants for monarchs and other pollinators. The plants are required to be planted in neighborhood rights-of-ways, libraries, public properties and schools.

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.

When designs for city parks are being developed, our Park Planners incorporate locations for native plantings as park of the master plans. Open areas, storm water basins, parking lot dividers, rain gardens and ornamental beds are all considered.

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)

260

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

165

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

Des Moines Parks and Recreation, Blank Park Zoo, Des Moines Libraries

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)

Maintain Garden. Located at the Iowa State Capitol Complex, north parking entrance.

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, Polk County Soil and Water, Des Moines Botanical Gardens, Prairie Landscapes of Iowa, County Conservation Board

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.

0.04

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).

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. for the Blank Park Zoo

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)

2

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

Rose Farms - Farm School Oakridge Oak Academy

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

In person programming and live milkweed and native Iowa nectar plants.

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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20 students 2 educators

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

AmeriCorps Food Access, Oakridge Neighborhood, City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation

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.

0.01

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

Oakridge and AmeriCorps together are responsible for the maintenance schedule.

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).

The Blank Park Zoo maintains the Plant.Grow.Fly. program. P.G.F. has some printed materials, a sociam media presence and maintains online information through the Blank Park Zoo website. Des Moines Parks and Recreation posts videos for social media highlighting native species of plants and maintains some online information.

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)

The City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation works with Des Moines Neighborhood Associations for planting in public right-of-ways.

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

8000

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.

37000 square feet

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

Each Neighborhood Association is responsible for care and maintenance of the plantings.

Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation’s Community Wildlife Habitat program).

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

Des Moines Audubon, Blank Park Zoo, Trees Forever, National Heritage Foundation, Des Moines Parks and Recreatioin

What program was launched or maintained to complete this effort? (Please include a link to the program, if possible)

Bird Friendly Iowa launched, Trees forever maintained

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?

Des Moines Parks and Recreation Community Gardens

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

38

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

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Asclepias incarnata, Asceipias tuberosa, Liatris liguslistylis and Echinacea pallida were suplimented into a garden plot that holds a large amount of Asclepias syriaca. The garden is maintained by the gardeners that have plots at this location.

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

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

1 acres

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.

Upcycle is a volunteer based program where the volunteers work to remove invasive species in our public parks. The removed material is then upcycled to the Blank Park Zoo when appropriate for animal enrichment. There is also a partnership with a local brewery that provides the volunteers with a cold beverage after the work is done. Plants are cut or pulled and stumps chemically treated to stop regrowth.

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)

2

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

Information includes the lifecycle of the monarch butterfly and some plant identification. Gray's Lake sign https://www.pulsedesign.com/outdoor-interpretive-sign-monarch-butterfly-migration-life-cycle-milkweed-pollinator-garden-habitat

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

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

No Mow May.pdf

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

City Council and Office of the Mayor

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

Mayor Cownie declared a proclamation for No Mow May for the year 2023 in the City of Des Moines

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.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ntdiZQgA9A

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

Proclamation for month of May 2023.

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

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

ADAPT DSM.pdf

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

For ADAPT DSM, the first climate Action and adaptation plan for Des Moines, we partnered with local community based organizations, and education organizations t introduce specific actions to protect pollinator habitat. Groups include the Des Moines Botanical Garden, the Blank Park Zoo, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. We are also providing educational resources for homeowners about the critical importance of maintaining migratory habitats for pollinators.

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

Complete

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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.

December 5, 2023

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).

329

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

Des Moines Parks and Recreation, Des Moines Libraries, Blank Park Zoo

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

Monarch Watch Fall Migration Tagging programs https://www.google.com/search?q=monarch+watch&rlz=1C1GCEB_enUS837US837&oq=&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqBggBEEUYOzIGCAAQRRg5MgYIARBFGDsyBwgCEAAY
8 https://www.blankparkzoo.com/conservation/plantgrowfly

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