City of Des Moines

Des Moines, IA

Mayor Connie Boesen

Pledge Summary

The City of Des Moines Iowa has a new mayor for 2024 and she is dedicated to continuing the Mayors' Monarch Pledge. Mayor Connie Boesen comes to office proud of the Monarch Conservation that Des Moines has already provided and excited to support even more actions in 2024. 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 beautiful city. Mayor Boesen is committed to conservation and sustainable practices that enhance our city and provide habitat for monarch butterflies, pollinators, and wildlife in our city.

Action Items Committed for 2024

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.

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- 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

- Remove milkweed from the list of noxious plants in city weed / landscaping ordinances (if applicable).
- 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.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides, or other chemicals that are harmful to monarchs and pollinators and 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

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

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number of individuals reached in the answer field below (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only.).

627

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.)

376

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.

3.15

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.

Greenspace around new buildings on public property, Community Gardens, containers and gardens on private properties.

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

We partner with our public libraries for free programming where everyone makes a planter using milkweed and other Iowa natives to create backyard habitat. The City of Des Moines is using natives in new construction at public building that serve the whole community. We work within our own Equity Program to provide monarch presentations at our summer camps and Spring Break programs.

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

The City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation is a NRPA National Gold Medal Award winner and part of that honor comes from the conservation and use if Iowa Native plants in our community. The City of Des Moines partners with several organizations within the City of Des Moines that are private to promote conservation and education. The Blank Park Zoo, Des Moines Botanical Gardens and Science Center of Iowa along with other groups all play a roll in supporting the Mayor's Monarch Pledge.

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?

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Guides and online information to share are helpful. Information regarding the USFWS listing as threatened and what this means to the public.

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

The majority of our Environmental Education programs for the moth of September are all focused on the Monarch Butterfly and habitat needed for it to survive.

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.

Remove milkweed from the list of noxious plants in city weed / landscaping ordinances (if applicable).

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.

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

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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.

Parks and Recreation maintains no mow areas in selected parks, hosts annual milkweed planting public programs, milkweed planting programs with community rehabilitation facilities, and uses native Iowa plant species for landscaping at public buildings and in public parks. Parks and Recreation has also used fire on parks land to revive Iowa prairie species that have been dormant. Public Works partners with Parks and Recreation to design storm water basins using native Iowa plant species including milkweed species. Blank Park Zoo and the Des Moines Botanical Gardens have native planting on their property.

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)

Iowa State Capitol Complex, north parking entrance. Maintain Garden. This location is in the middle of the migration flyway and this is where the laws that govern Iowa are produced.

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, Polk 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

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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)

They are located in the City of Des Moines neighborhood public right-of-ways and in neighborhood medians.

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

7000

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.

3500 square feet

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

Each of the Neighborhood Associations that takes part in the program are responsible for planting, the care and maintenance of the plants provided.

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).

349

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.

In the month of September we hosted nine Monarch Tagging programs in nine different locations. WE support the University of Kansas Monarch Watch tagging program.

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

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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, Des Moines Parks and Recreation Community Gardens

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

228

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

Asclepias incarnata, Asceipias tuberosa, Liatris liguslistylis and Echinacea pallida were added into a community Garden Plot, filling in areas where plants had died out. One new pollinator garden was added at a different community garden. The same plants were also added to a garden at the Parks and Recreation office increasing diversity and density of natives in that area.

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)

3

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

Two signs are pollinator based. One is information on the lifecycle of the monarch butterfly with some milkweed information.

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.

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

Complete

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

Reduce or eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides, or other chemicals that are harmful to monarchs and pollinators and urban wildlife.

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

Parks and Recreation. The city greenhouse has reduced its use of pesticides by using some biological pest controls. Areas in parks have been zoned no mow.

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

in progress

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.

PlantGrowFly logo.pdf

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

The Blank Park Zoo continues to maintain the Plant.Grow.Fly. program. P.G.F. has some printed materials, a social 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.

Engage with Homeowners Associations (HOAs), Community Associations or neighborhood organizations to identify opportunities to plant monarch

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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.pdf

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

Around 40 Neighborhood Associations annually.

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

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 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 that contains various milkweed species and other native species mixed with nectar- producing plants. There is a pollinator and butterfly sign that identifies the garden plot. Many of our garden plot owners, keep milkweed and nectar plants in their own spaces.

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.

Des Moines Parks and Recreation houses four planners on staff that incorporate native plantings in our city parks when improvements and changes are made, as part of the master plans. Open areas, storm water basins, parking lot dividers, rain gardens and ornamental beds are all considered. The Des Moines City Managers department also has planners and Architects that design new facilities utilizing Iowa native species of plants including milkweeds for landscaping.

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

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

350

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

75

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

Des Moines Libraries, Blank Park Zoo and Des Moines Parks and Recreation. There were several events that took place this year.

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).

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

Bird Friendly Iowa.pdf

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 Recreation

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

Bird Friendly Iowa maintained, Trees forever maintained

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.

Upcycle.pdf

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

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2 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.

Maintain. Our award-winning UPCYCLE program is a unique partnership between the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department, Blank Park Zoo, Trees Forever, and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

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)

2289

What was the date of your festival?

September 7, 2024

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, 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).

This is an annual event. 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

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.

Ordinance.pdf

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

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City Council

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

Complete

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.

March 18, 2024 Native Vegitation. Purposefully-planted Native Vegetation shall be permitted to exceed ten (10) inches in height provided they do not constitute a nuisance under this code:

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, Des Moines City Managers Office

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 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.

We do not have an ordinance but it is a Parks and Recreation standard practice to include natives in all new projects and the city architects also include them in landscaping for new properties.

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

Ongoing.

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

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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)

Maintained. Plant.Grow.Fly. from 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 Lovejoy Elementary School

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

In person programming and live milkweed and native Iowa 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).

50 students 4 educators

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

Blank Park Zoo, 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.

0.04

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

Lovejoy Elementary School is responsible for the maintenance schedule.

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