

City of Sun Prairie

Sun Prairie, WI

Mayor Paul Esser

Pledge Summary

Sun Prairie is a vibrant and thriving community located in northeastern Dane county, just east of the City of Madison. Sun Prairie has become known in the region for its high quality of life, its excellent parks and recreation programs, historic downtown, exceptional public school system, and progressive approach to the development and redevelopment of the community. The city is committed to making Sun Prairie a leading sustainable, vibrant and environmentally friendly community by taking steps to conserve energy, reduce waste, and preserve our natural resources. The city is looking forward to engaging residents in building more pollinator-friendly habitats throughout the community.

Action Items Committed for 2025

Communications and Convening

- Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.
- 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.
- Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.
- Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Steve Stocker	2026	2/20/2026	
Mayor Paul Esser	2025	3/25/2025	Leadership Circle
Mayor Paul Esser	2024	3/21/2024	Leadership Circle
Mayor Paul Esser	2023	3/28/2023	Signatories
Mayor Paul Esser	2022	3/29/2022	Signatories
Mayor Paul Esser	2021	4/19/2021	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).

943

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.)

48

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).

1.01

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.

City parks, public spaces, and residences.

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

The City is leveraging the Mayors' Monarch Pledge to engage marginalized communities by creating inclusive, culturally reflective environmental projects. Our new sustainability-themed mural centered diverse youth voices, with design submissions coming from young people across a wide range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, all our events are free to attend and open to all members of the public. Beyond digital promotion efforts for our programs and events, we also display flyers at accessible community organizations like the library, the YMCA, and the Sunshine Place a local non-profit that offers food and housing resources. Our efforts are ever expansive to cast a wider net to reach a broader audience.

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

With sustainability as a top priority in Sun Prairie, we acknowledge the importance of conservation of land, resources, and habitat to promote biodiversity. We strive to expand our commitment to action items within the Mayor's Monarch Pledge as we work towards increasing native plantings and pollinator habitat friendly practices within the 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?

This year, we received plant donations from White Pelican Farms and partnered with Dane County Extension who helped us host our Natural Lawn Workshop in April 2025. We also worked with Developing Artists and Murals Alliances who supported the creation and installation of our Wetmore Park sustainability mural. Resources related to what other communities are doing to advance pollinator friendly initiatives would be helpful to us. Successful programs, events, and/or ordinance changes would all be great to reference.

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

The Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department and the Public Works Department continued practicing prescribed burns on city properties to restore native habitats. The City also updated the ordinance and rebranded the No Mow May program to Slow Mow-Let it Grow which led to increased participation in this pollinator friendly initiative. The ordinance allows for the program to start in the 3rd week of April, rather than in May. The expanded program also encourages reducing the frequency of mowing practices throughout the growing season to allow for lawns to bloom. Finally, we saw a 20% growth in engagement with our Earth Month programming, which included programming related to pollinator-friendly practices and we hope to see that growth continue.

Selected Action Items

Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.

Date of Proclamation:

March 18, 2025

Title of Proclamation (i.e. – Monarch Day or Pollinator Week):

Earth Day, Arbor Day & Mayor's Monarch Pledge

Upload a copy of your proclamation.

[Supporting Document for - PROCLAMATION - EARTH DAY ARBOR DAY AND MAYORS .pdf](#)

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.

[Sustainable Sun Prairie Fall Newsletter.png](#)

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

Newsletter, social media posts, Natural Lawn Workshop & Slow Mow-Let it Grow webpages <https://cityofsunprairie.com/DocumentCenter/View/16329/Natural-Lawn-Workshop-Slides>

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

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

[IMG_0078.jpeg](#)

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

This year, our community garden gained a new native pollinator plant strip as a part of the newly planted community orchard. This initiative significantly increased native and non-native flower plants in our community garden. To complete this project, Parks, Recreation, and Forestry staff partnered with local girl scouts and nurseries. Planning, planting, and maintaining this space have been and will continue to be a collaborative effort between the city and volunteers. We hope to continue to strengthen our relationship with our community garden and its members.

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.

[FP107682.jpg](#)

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

Developing Artists and Murals Alliances, Sun Prairie Area School District, and Sun Prairie's Parks, Recreation and Forestry

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

279

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).

Our community recently installed a large-scale sustainability-themed mural as a collaborative public art project. The 300-square-foot mural was created through a partnership with Developing Artists, Murals & Alliances (DAMA WI). Its design was inspired by artwork submitted by local youth, ensuring that the perspectives and creativity of young residents were centered in the final piece. More than 150 community members helped paint the mural during Earth Month, making the project a truly collective effort. The mural, which features a monarch butterfly, was formally unveiled at Wetmore Park during the City's Sustainability Fair. This project advanced cultural awareness by celebrating community identity, elevating youth voices, and highlighting Sun Prairie's commitment to a sustainable future. The collaborative process itself fostered connection, belonging, and recognition across diverse groups in the community.

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

How many plants were sold and/or given away at your event?

450

How many people attended your event?

250

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

White Pelican Farms, Sun Prairie Historical Museum, and Sun Prairie's Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department

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

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

[IMG_2021.jpeg](#)

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)

Maintaining city hall pollinator garden 300 E. Main St. Sun Prairie, 53590 which is in a highly visible & trafficked part of downtown, adjacent to Cannery Square.

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

This garden is maintained and lead by the City of Sun Prairie Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department.

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.

.01

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.

[IMG_2006.jpeg](#)

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

Sun Prairie Parks Friends, Plant Dane Program through Dane County

How many plants were planted?

600

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

In 2025, PRF worked with volunteers and SPPF to plant over 600 native plant plugs in landscaping areas across city parks and facilities. We also worked with a girl scout to add a new pollinator garden in the new community orchard that was seeded in the fall.

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?

1.2

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.

We worked with SPPF to remove invasive shrubs with the cut stump method (buckthorn and honeysuckle) from a mixed hardwoods at a Smith's Crossing community park.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

How many garden signs are being displayed and where are they located?

2

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

The signs describe the value of native plants and how they support pollinator species.

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?

Administration Department and Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department

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.

In April 2025, we simplified the lawn ordinance and registration process and expanded our Now Mow May program to Slow Mow-Let it Grow along with updating the ordinance to allow it to start in the third week in April.

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?

Sustain Dane, Sun Prairie Public Library, Sunshine Place

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.

Monarch conservation was mentioned in the 2025 approved Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, adopted by city council 2025. Resiliency Center and renovated Library native gardens in 2026 and Climate Action Plan to be adopted in 2026.

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?

LEED for Cities

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 City of Sun Prairie is continuing to work towards this as it is pursuing certification via LEED for cities which is expected to be complete in April 2026.

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 City of Sun Prairie updated the ordinance and rebranded its No Mow May program to Slow Mow-Let it Grow which led to increased participation in this pollinator friendly initiative. The ordinance allows for the program to start in the 3rd week of April, rather than in May. The expanded program also encourages reducing the frequency of mowing practices throughout the growing season to allow for lawns to bloom. In addition to residences, 7 city-owned parks and properties participated in this initiative to conserve pollinator habitat and foraging resources.

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

Participants received biweekly emails with tips on pollinator friendly yard maintenance in addition to resources such as native plant lists and growth habits, lists of native nurseries, and information about starting a natural lawn. Participants were provided with a free yard sign to display in their yard to promote awareness.