City of Columbia Heights

Columbia Heights, MN

Mayor Amada Marquez Simula

Pledge Summary

Columbia Heights is a first-ring suburb of Minneapolis, MN bustling with love for Monarch butterflies. The city has an exciting time bringing all ages together to share a passion for Monarchs and pollinators. The city has book clubs, a bilingual festival, and art projects all centered around the Monarch butterfly.

Action Items Committed for 2023

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.
- 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 art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.
- 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.

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- Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.
- Convert vacant lots to monarch habitat.
- 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).
- Host or support a monarch neighborhood challenge to engage neighborhoods and homeowners' associations within the community to increase awareness, support community unity around a common mission, and/or create habitat for the monarch butterfly.
- Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.
- 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

- Increase the percentage of native plants, shrubs and trees that must be used in city landscaping ordinances and encourage use of milkweed, where appropriate.
- 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.
- 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.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Amada Marquez Simula	2023	4/11/2023	
Mayor Amáda Márquez Simula	2022	12/21/2021	Leadership Circle
Mayor Amáda Márquez Simula	2021	4/27/2021	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.).

1000

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.)

100

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.

5

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.

Faith communities, schools, public land, private land, rights-of-way

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

Our website is available in multiple languages and our Monarch Festival is a bilingiual festival with translators who speak Spanish and English. Plus we have members in our community who speak other languages that receive our messaging through the library and schools.

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

We want to protect and encourage Monarch butterflies to thrive, benefiting the environment and allowing more people to enjoy watching them.

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?

For our community specifically, it would be great to have a public portal to intake the information for what is being done in the community. That way it would cut down in staff/Mayor time to input this date.

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

We're doing great work and I hope to continue the effort in the future by bringing in city staff ahead of time and staff to be in charge of the data.

Selected Action Items

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)

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)

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

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

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).

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

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.

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

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).

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

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

Host or support a monarch neighborhood challenge to engage neighborhoods and homeowners' associations within the community to increase awareness, support community unity around a common mission, and/or create habitat for the monarch butterfly.

How many estimated individuals participated in your challenge? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only, e.g. 100).

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

When did this challenge take place?

What is the total acreage of habitat created? Please limit your answer to only the number of acres in the answer field below (e.g., 2 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.

Please describe your challenge and the results.

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)

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

Increase the percentage of native plants, shrubs and trees that must be used in city landscaping ordinances and encourage use of milkweed, where appropriate.

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.

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?

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.

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?

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.

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.

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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 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.

Columbia Heights Mayor's Monarch Pledge - HeightsNEXT.pdf

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

Social Media, printed materials, word of mouth, flyers, and websites in Spanish and English. See attachments for examples. We have yard signs to denote neighborhood pollinator gardens with a Monarch butterfly on them. We have a mapping website to show properties that participate in Monarch Gardens.

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.

Our city has updated property ordinances to include native plants. Our library, park, and rec have done programs with seniors and youth to learn about pollinators and Monarchs. Our public works have planted pollinator-friendly grasses and increased native flowers in city gardens and parks.

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

Public interest and engagement have happened for all the above items. We also started "No Mow May" in 2021, and in 2024, we changed it to Less Mow May. We are still discussing outlawing chem laws.

Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Nature Centers, Native Plant Society Chapters , other

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long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.

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

Rotary; Operation Pollination

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

We do this at the Monarch Festival. We have the Master Gardens in attendance. We teach Master Garden classes at the library and school. The Rotary International Pollination group is active. Our school district has a Agriculture Specialist that also have a Pollinator garden and Monarch habitat. So all the school children are learning about them. HeightsNEXT is a longstanding local non-profit that is a leader for pollinators and Monarch habitat.

Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

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

Monarch Festival, Rotary, School District, City of Columbia Heights, local artist

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

300

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).

We had Mariachi music and dancing and art projects and painted back board.

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

500

What species were collected or propagated?

milkweed, cosmos, marigold, bluestem grass

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

Rotary, etc

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

We handed out milkweed seeds at multiple events.

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)

At old city hall, demonstaration garden of pollinator plants. It is a nectar food source for Monarchs and culturarl revelant to the city.

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

A community member started this and it evolved to become a native and nectar producing garden.

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.

128

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:

January Plant Milkweed Month 2023

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

January Plant Milkweed Month 2023

Upload a copy of your proclamation.

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Plant Milkweed Proclamation 2023.pdf

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.

Screenshot 2026-04-23 at 11.05.47 PM.png

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

Park View Villa apartments have multiple monarch/pollinator gardens. Sullivan Shores has a pollinator garden along the walking path. Multiple churches have monarch/pollinator gardens. 6+ organizations

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

All these organizations decided to plan monarch/pollinator gardens so they wouldn't have to mow as much, it would be better for water runoff and pollinators, and the community would enjoy the gardens.

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.

At our city council, we have discussed requiring all developments to include a plan for native pollinators and milkweed plantings.

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.

The Blooming Sunshine garden provides fresh food that is donated to the food shelf across the street. It is also a beautiful space where people can sit and socialize. The native pollinator garden adjacent to the food plot supports the garden's health and provides habitat for Monarchs and other pollinators. This creates an engaging environment for the

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entire community. Columbia Heights is a city where 50% of the population identifies as people of color, and the median household income is approximately $73,921.

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)

30

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

35

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

HeightsNEXT, Sister Cities, School District, Rotary, MWMO, City Council, Police Dept. neighborhood

Convert vacant lots to monarch habitat.

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

Screenshot 2026-04-23 at 11.18.11 PM.png

Where is the monarch habitat located? (Please provide an address, if possible)

Location 80 39th Ave NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421

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

HeightsNEXT, City of Columbia Heights, City Council

What is the total acreage of land that has been converted? Please limit your answer to only the number of acres in the answer field below (e.g., 2 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.

1

How many lots were converted to monarch habitat? Please limit your answer to only the number of lots in the answer field below (e.g., 3)

0.29

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Please describe when the lots were converted to monarch habitat and the planned maintenance schedule.

Started in 2018, the garden has grown larger each year. There are nectar plants and milkweed. There is signage noting it is a pollinator garden and a Mayor's Monarch Pledge garden.

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.

Screenshot 2026-04-23 at 11.00.29 PM.png

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

Blooming Sunshine Garden. https://heightsnext.org/food-forest/ has a large berm with all native plants including milkweed and nectar-producing plants, approximately 200 feet long and 10 feet wide. Land provided by the city and worked with non-profits; HeightsNEXT, Rotary, School groups, Daughters of the American Revolution, Public Library, Sister Cities, and neighborhood volunteers. We coordinated educational outreach and events and volunteered in the garden to plant, weed, and harvest. Hosted a garden potluck.

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)

Łominaki Park, 80 39th Ave NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421, has a monarch garden/habitat and a native garden planted along the public right-of-way near a train yard. We have planted bee lawns in public lots waiting for development and in public parks.

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

10

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.

.5

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

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Each summer, the plants fill in the spaces more and more. The Rotary club helps donate money to buy more plants for nectar, and milkweed seeds are sown in the winter.

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)

350

What was the date of your festival?

August 9, 2023

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

Churches, schools, business organizations, non-profits, dancers, musicians, vendors, city departments

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 Annual Columbia Heights Monarch Festival is a free, family-friendly event at Kordiak Park celebrating monarch butterflies and pollinator conservation. Our most recent festival took place on August 9, 2023, from 5 to 8 PM, drawing residents of all ages and backgrounds for an evening of music, dance, education, and cultural celebration. The event opened with a welcome from Mayor Amáda Márquez Simula, followed by live Mariachi music, Ballet Folklórico performances, a bilingual book reading by Columbia Heights librarians, a children's costume parade, a puppet wagon show, monarch education, and salsa dance parties for kids and adults. Local food trucks served attendees throughout the evening, and vendor and non-profit tables shared resources on pollinator conservation and community services. Accessibility was built into every part of the festival. All programming—from the stage emcee to festival tables and printed materials—was delivered in both English and Spanish, reflecting the monarch's migration across the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, as well as our community's bilingual makeup. We recruited and paid bilingual volunteers so Spanish-speaking families could fully participate. The festival was entirely free, held at a centrally located neighborhood park, and required no registration, allowing residents to attend simply by showing up. Programming engaged multiple generations at once, and a partnership among HeightsNEXT, the City of Columbia Heights, First Lutheran Church, and the Fridley-Columbia Heights Rotary Club made the event possible, broadening our outreach and resources.

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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?

City of Columbia Heights

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.

Milkweed hasn't been on the noxious list.

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?

HeightsNEXT, Rotary, City of Columbia Heights

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

30

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

Native flowers and milkweed are added each year to the HeightsNEXT Blooming Sunshine garden and berm. Up to 20 volunteers support this effort. The city of Columbia Heights donates the land, water, and mulch for the garden.

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?

City of Columbia Heights, HeightsNEXT, Sustainability Commission

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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.

In progress

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

The Sustainability Commission is working on adopting the Monarch Pledge and tracking the details. The city has improved tree plantings for construction projects and is encouraging native plantings, so this progress should continue.

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