City of Austin

Austin, TX

Mayor Kirk Watson

Pledge Summary

Austin, Texas is one of the fastest growing metro areas in the United States according to the United State Census Bureau. Despite this rapid growth The City of Austin has a strong history of wildlife conservation in the face of a rapidly changing climate. Austin was the first city in Texas to adopt the Mayor's Monarch pledge and has a long-standing history as a Community Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation. Located in the heart of Texas, Austin sits along the central fly way of the monarch butterfly migration route and is dedicated to preserving and maintaining milkweed and nectar sources for the monarch's migration.

Action Items Committed for 2024

Communications and Convening

- 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.

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.
- Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.
- Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

Systems Change

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

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Kirk Watson	2025	4/29/2025	
Mayor Kirk Watson	2024	3/29/2024	Signatories
Mayor Kirk Watson	2023	12/1/2022	Signatories
Mayor Steve Adler	2022	5/24/2022	Leadership Circle
Mayor Steve Adler	2021	4/28/2021	Leadership Circle

Action Items

In total, how many individuals have been reached through the Mayors' Monarch Pledge in your community this year (Jan-Dec)? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field below (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only.).

50000

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.)

30000

In total, how many acres of monarch habitat have been created in your city in the last 12 months? Please limit your answer to only the number of acres in the answer field below (e.g., 3). Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

0.5

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.

Pollinator habitat is being created in residences, schools, places of worship, rights-of-way, roadsides, community gardens, culturally-significant locations, shared public spaces and common areas or parks.

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

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In Austin, we use the Mayors' Monarch Pledge to connect communities to conservation through inclusive, citywide events like the Roots & Wings Festival and It's My Park Day. These free, family-friendly events are held across diverse neighborhoods and include hands-on activities like seed ball making, pollinator garden installations, and educational booths, making it easy for residents of all backgrounds to engage in habitat restoration and learn about pollinators. We also partner with schools, libraries, and community gardens—many located in underserved areas—to increase access to native plants and conservation knowledge. Programs like the Bee City Committee's outreach, the Community Gardens Program, and the Pollinator Pop-Quiz at Austin Public Library help us reach low-income communities and communities of color in meaningful, lasting ways.

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

Austin's motivation for taking and continuing the Mayors' Monarch Pledge stems from a deep commitment to ecological sustainability, biodiversity, and community engagement. As a city that values both environmental stewardship and equitable access to nature, the pledge aligns with our goals to restore native habitats, connect people with the land, and involve residents—especially those in historically underserved areas—in meaningful conservation efforts.

What resources have been most helpful to you thus far and what new resources would you like to see to help meet your goals? What resources would be useful to help expand equitable engagement in community processes and access to high-quality, usable nature?

Resources like the National Wildlife Federation's action framework, community science platforms like iNaturalist, and partnerships with local experts and nonprofits have been especially helpful. City-supported programs such as the Community Gardens Program and events like the Roots & Wings Festival provide strong platforms for outreach and engagement. To meet our goals, we'd benefit from additional multilingual and culturally responsive educational materials, funding for habitat projects in underserved neighborhoods, and tools for tracking long-term community impact. Resources that support neighborhood-led projects and improve access to nature in areas lacking green space would be particularly valuable for expanding equitable engagement.

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

N/A

Selected Action Items

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.

200

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

City departments, including Parks and Recreation and sustainability staff, collaborated with community groups to identify areas for native planting and habitat restoration. This included incorporating milkweed and native nectar plants into parklands and community gardens, revising mowing schedules to support pollinator habitats, and using goats for vegetation management along the Ann & Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail to control invasive species while preserving native plant growth.

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)

Milkweed has been planted in the landscaped areas at the Austin City Hall. The Austin Park Rangers also created and maintain a demonstration garden at the Zilker Cottage, a historically significant building near the north entrance gate to Barton Springs, a spring-fed swimming area that attracts about 800,000 visitors each year.
https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Special_Events/Zilker/Park_Ranger_Station_at_Zilker_Caretaker_Cottage_program

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

Austin Park Rangers, Ranger Cadet program (Akins High School)

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.

.25

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)

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60000

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

11000

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

The Wildflower Center has many corporate sponsors supporting its efforts. These include: Asakura Robinson, Balcones Resources, Bartlett Tree Experts, Décor IQ, H-E-B, Tito's Handmade Vodka, Art Seen Alliance, Cicada Lighting, Madera Custom Homes, Native American Seed, Austin Wood Recycling, Blubiome, Central Texas Valet, Energy Renewal Partners, Fast Frame, Jerry's Art-a-rama, Juice Real Estate Group, OSO Electric Equipment, Port Enterprises, Texas Urban Sawmill, Waiting Made Easier, WayAround, Capital Printing, Meridian Hive, etc. There are also many nonprofit partners that support efforts of all kinds at the center including, The Native Plant Society of Texas, Texas Master Naturalist, etc.

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).

2000

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

Bee City, Zilker Botanical Garden, Texas Master Naluralist Programs, iNaturalist

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

"The City Nature Challenge brought together over 1,600 participants in 2024 to document local biodiversity by observing wildlife and uploading findings to iNaturalist, fostering global collaboration in nature awareness and data collection. During the fall monarch migration, the BioBlitz engaged over 1,000 participants from October 11–27, 2024. This project focused specifically on pollinators—including butterflies, bees, bats, and more—and the native plants they rely on. Observations collected during BioBlitz are vital for understanding the distribution and ecological needs of these species, informing habitat management strategies for future conservation efforts. Additionally, the Bee Monitoring Program at Zilker Botanical Garden mobilized citizen scientists to observe and document native bees, contributing valuable data through iNaturalist on foraging behavior and plant usage. These efforts support broader pollinator health monitoring, including for monarchs."

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.

576.6 acres (broadcast burns) + additional 109 tons of biomass removed from pile burns

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.

PARD Land Management conducted seven broadcast burns and five pile burns at Decker Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and Louis René Barrera Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary. These efforts restored native ecosystems by reducing invasive plant cover, opening canopies, and enhancing conditions for wildflower and milkweed growth. Goats were also used for sustainable vegetation management along Lady Bird Lake, reducing fire risks while improving visibility and habitat quality. Volunteers do mechanical removals (hand pulling, weed wrenching) ACCC Crews do mechanical (chainsaw, handsaw, loppers, weed wrenches, etc) with follow up of herbicide cut stump treatments as needed. Some is chipped and dispersed on site, some chipped and hauled off for disposal, some is burned in piles.

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?

Austin Code Enforcement

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.

Austin allows habitat certification and habitat management plans to be used as an affirmative defense against ordinances that limit, for example, the height of herbaceous vegetation. City of Austin Code Enforcement officers regularly consult with the Wildlife Austin program

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coordinator regarding questions about certified habitats, native species, or urban habitat in general.
https://library.municode.com/tx/austin/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT10PUHESESA_CH10-5MIPUHERE_ART2SACOREPR

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