City of Austin

Austin, TX

Mayor Kirk Watson

Pledge Summary

Austin shows a strong, community-wide commitment to monarch and pollinator conservation through education, habitat restoration, and hands-on engagement. City departments, nonprofits, schools, and volunteers collaborate on efforts like the Bee Monitoring Project, City Nature Challenge, and BioBlitz, which engage thousands in documenting pollinator activity and supporting native ecosystems. Large events such as the Roots & Wings Festival and It's My Park Day mobilize residents in planting, invasive species removal, and restoration of green spaces. Demonstration gardens, prescribed burns, and community-led prairie projects further expand pollinator-friendly habitats. These efforts reflect Austin's dedication to biodiversity, equitable access to nature, and long-term ecological health under the Mayors' Monarch Pledge.

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.
- 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-driven educational conservation strategy, initiative, or practice that focuses on and benefits local, underserved residents.
- 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.
- 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).
- 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.
- 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.
- Increase the percentage of native plants, shrubs and trees that must be used in city landscaping ordinances and encourage use of milkweed, where appropriate.
- 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.
- Launch, expand, or continue one or more ordinances to reduce light pollution to benefit urban wildlife.

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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?

"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

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,

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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).

Engage with Homeowners Associations (HOAs), Community Associations or neighborhood organizations to identify opportunities to plant monarch gardens and revise maintenance and mowing programs.

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

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

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.

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.

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?

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).

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).

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.

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)

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

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.

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

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)

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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).

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.

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?

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

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

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.

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.

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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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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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:

05/14/15

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

RESOLUTION NO. 20150514-004

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.

In 2024, the City of Austin engaged with community garden groups through the Community Gardens Program, which supports the creation and maintenance of gardens on city-owned land. This program includes 787 gardens featuring food forests, teaching gardens, orchards, and pollinator plantings. Through partnerships with nonprofit organizations, garden leaders received resources such as grants, liability insurance, and volunteer support. Educational outreach occurred at plant sales, neighborhood swaps, and community events like the Roots & Wings Festival, where groups like Ecology Action and Grow Green promoted native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants through hands-on activities, demonstrations, and informational booths.

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,

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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.

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 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

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?

Bee City

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

In Progress

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.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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)

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 Austin Public Libraries and the Austin Nature & Science Center offer free access to their seed libraries where community members can take and leave native seeds. The Bee City ATX programs give away native wildflower and antelope horn milkweed seeds. There are also many nonprofit organization in Austin that provide access to native plants, including The Native Plant Society of Texas - Austin Chapter,

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Travis County Master Gardener Association, Hyde Park Plant Swappers, and the Sunshine Community Gardens Plant Sale. The Wildflower Center has many corporate and non-profit sponsors supporting its efforts. These include: Native American Seed, Austin Wood Recycling, Energy Renewal Partners, Jerry's Art-a-rama, H-E-B, Tito's Handmade Vodka, Texas Master Naturalist, etc.

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 1 million visitors annually.
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

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

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, Austin Nature & Science Center, Zilker Botanical Garden, Texas Master Naturalist Programs, iNaturalist

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

During the 2025 Roots & Wings Festival, at the Zilker Botanical Gardens event, a Monarch tagging course was offered to several volunteers. Using their new found knowledge the volunteers worked in partnership with Monarch Watch to tag 100 of the 200 Monarch butterflies released during the event.

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.

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

BUNP Lightning Round RW.pdf

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)

11797

What was the date of your festival?

10/17-11/1/2025

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

Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Watershed Protection - Grow Green, Ecology Action, St. Edward's University, South Austin Creek Alliance, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and more.

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 Roots & Wings Festival is a citywide celebration of trees and pollinators, including monarch butterflies. In 2025, the festival featured 200 individual events across Austin and engaged over 11,797 attendees. Activities included nature walks, interactive educational booths, pollinator crafts, seed ball making, habitat planting, and community science participation. Events were spread over multiple weeks in

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October to coincide with monarch migration and were held at accessible community spaces such as parks, libraries, nature preserves, and schools. Accessibility was prioritized through free admission, family-friendly programming, bilingual materials, and partnerships with local schools and community organizations to ensure equitable outreach and participation.

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