City of St. Louis Park

St. Louis Park, MN

Mayor Jake Spano

Pledge Summary

The City of St. Louis Park is a fully developed first tier suburb of Minneapolis. Understanding the impacts of this development level, St. Louis Park has committed to being a leader in environmental stewardship as one of its strategic objectives. St. Louis Park is also home to 52 parks and the Westwood Hills Nature Center which educates and connects the urban population with the natural environment. Mayor Spano of St. Louis Park is committing to promote the addition and enhancement of habitat in parks and throughout the city that supports and protects the monarch butterfly and other pollinators by signing the Mayor's Pledge.

Action Items Committed for 2023

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Convert vacant lots to monarch habitat.
- Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.
- Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.
- Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.
- 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).
- 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.

Systems Change

- 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.

Communications and Convening

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- 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 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.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Nadia Mohamed	2026	3/31/2026	
Mayor Nadia Mohamed	2025	3/28/2025	Leadership Circle
Mayor Nadia Mohamed	2024	3/27/2024	Leadership Circle
Mayor Jake Spano	2023	3/27/2023	Leadership Circle
Mayor Jake Spano	2022	3/14/2022	Leadership Circle

Action Items

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.

2.76

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

This pledge process keeps the importance of dedicating resources to pollinator friendly practices in the forefront for city staff and elected officials. It also helps us focus objectives and tasks surrounding our urban ecology.

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?

Regular webinars and recordings of webinars or city success stories is helpful and well as presentations of the latest research surrounding monarchs.

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.).

1275

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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.

Parks, community gardens, right of way adjacent to a school, recreation center, vacant lots, general right of ways, medians.

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

We utilzed the planting of pollinator friendly plants in right of ways component to install pollinator friendly plant near our elementary school that is within our state identified Environmental Justice area of need. We have also placed our pollinator/monarch demonstration gardens in parks and public spaces available to all residents in our city such as our recreation center and near park signs.

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.)

1000 youth, 275 adults

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

The City of St. Louis Park as branded its pollinator efforts "Pollinate the Park" to have a over arching program name for all of the work we are performing for this aspect of ecological restoration. The city has also now dedicated $30,000 annually (requires annual approval) in funds to be used for pollinator habitat improvement and maintenance.

Selected Action Items

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)

The Monarch Demonstration garden is located at 3700 Monterey Dr at our Recreation Center viewed by all people who enter the area to go to Wolfe park, the basketball court, pickleball courts and our aquatic park. It was originally planted and 2022 but both annual and perennial plants nectar rich plants were added in 2023. In addition, this year a new Pollinator Education Garden was installed at the Westwood Hills Nature Center. This is a big garden with over 2500 square feet and meant to be an education tool for witnessing pollinators of all types in action.

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

We worked with two Rotary clubs to prepare the site and plant the plugs.

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.

0.07

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.

8.4

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.

A grassroots community led habitat improvement program was established in 2023 with 12 current projects already under way. Residents who communicated a desire to work in degraded natural areas near their homes contacted the city and asked for permission to remove invasive species. With increasing interest of our residents requesting to voluntarily to improve the ecology of our natural areas we started a more formal program with a mission, guidelines, agreements and a waiver form. The natural resources staff are committed to help advise and provide support along with limited supplies as needed for these projects. Each group has a volunteer lead that communicates with Natural resources staff with requests for services and updates on progress. Our volunteer efforts are of utmost importance to the local ecology, turning these disturbed areas from ecological traps to ecological oasis. Currently, we have the following habitat improvement projects: a. At Browndale Park a wooded area by the stormwater pond led by Barb Patterson. b. On Meadowbrook Rd road along the creek and around a community butterfly garden in the Creekside neighborhood led by Debbie Johnson at the butterfly garden, Sandy Behnken at the wetland edge where miscanthus is the invasive and Kellie Berg who will be leading the buckthorn busts. c. At Bass Lake, a big project that has been in the works for years led by Nancy Rose and Friends of Bass Lake (a non profit organization 501(C)(3).) d. At Ridge Drive, city owned property along the railroad led by Judy Chucker. e. At Minikahda Vista, a buckthorn infested woodland area led by Karen Hessel. f. A city lot made into a bird sanctuary on Utah pond by the Westwood Hills neighborhood during COVID led my me, Judy Voigt g. A small prairie in a lot near Aquila School and an oddly shaped city owned lot between two houses lead by Emily Barker. h. A new pollinator way station in progress at a newly acquired city owned property on Toledo led by Melinda Hutchinson. i. A natural area near Aquila Elementary school, a native plant garden in the school yard and along the boulevard led by Vanessa Larson. j. A natural area the edge of twin lakes with an

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abandoned garden and woodland full of buckthorn led by Lara Carlson and Shirley Bolduc. k. A natural area along the trail off of Boone Ave that is led by Elaine Morrison and Bob Noble. l. A turf grass reduction project with several areas led by a Youth Environmental Activist group. In all cases the projects are on city owned land with the exception of the Aquila Elementary school project. The idea of these projects came from the community and were not initiated or maintained by the city. We try to keep everything equal in how we treat each project. All work of maintaining, watering, planting and seeding on a site are set up by the lead and volunteers they organize for the project. The city will support the cost of removing the debris from invasive species, some herbicide treatment if required, help with site analysis and assessment, and costs of seeds and plants once the invasive species are removed. Some projects that require heavy equipment for a degraded site get special treatment. The techniques that are used follow the recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Woody Invasives of the Great Lake Collaborative (WIGL) https://woodyinvasives.org/management/cut-stump-herbicide/#1562693702186-11d7d08f-7ea856be-2662 In general, woody species are cut and the stump treated with concentrated glyphosate using a buckthorn blaster dauber. Other plants are hand pulled or weed whipped such as garlic mustard or Canada thistle to prevent seed spread. Some herbicide is applied at appropriate times at the lowest concentration that is proven effective and according to lasts scientific evidence or recommendations. This is done typically for miscanthus grass (in June), Canada Thistle (in July) and Japanese Knotweed (in October). Invasive removal was followed up with dormant seeding.

Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.

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.

0.09

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

All of these new garden areas were watered twice a week for a month after planting until established and then every other week for the first year growing seasons if there is less than an inch of rain. Weeding is done as needed but less of a problem since a biodegradable weed suppression mat was put in place prior to planting. Some weeds will pop through the planting holes but are easily weeded out when found. Seeded areas such as at Cavell are reseeded in the fall just before a freeze or snowfall.

Where are the medians, roadsides and public rights-of-way? (Please provide an address or coordinates, if possible, or describe the location)

Cavell Circle, a center island of turn turned into native plant gardens 1625 square feet. Located near 2800,2810 and 2820 Cavell Ave south coordinates are -93.393114°, 44.951730° This area is by a popular walking trail along the railroad tracks. Mostly adults use this trail for daily dog walking or personal exercise. Cedar Lake Rd BLVD Native plant Garden at 6211 Cedar Lake Rd by the entrance to our city brush drop off site. 730 Sq ft This area is visited by our residents who are dropping off brush at the brush drop off site

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and by people biking or walking on the sidewalk/bike trail. Aquila Elementary School BLVD located at 8500 W 31st St with an area of 1600 sq ft. This area is visited by an entire elementary school on a daily basis.

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

1800

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.)

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

The City of St. Louis Park as started a branded program called "Pollinate the Park". This program encompassed all of the activities the city performs to enhance pollinator habitat on public and private property. This includes an annual native plant sale, conversion of underutilized turf areas to native plant/pollinator habitat, bee friendly parks were herbicides are not used, Rainwater rewards program for rain garden installation assistance, converting traditional park flower beds to pollinator pockets, programing for pollinator topics at our nature center, and working with schools to convert areas of turf to pollinator friendly landscapes. Web page is found here: https://www.stlouisparkmn.gov/government/departments-divisions/natural-resources/habitat-restoration/bees-and-pollinators

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.

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

The Natural Resources Division of the city has worked with the city Parks Department and Public Works Water Division to to identify areas of turf in the maintained park and utility areas that are not utilized for programming and can be converted into native prairie pollinator friendly areas. The city has dedicated $30,000 to this effort annually starting in 2023.

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

None other than city staff.

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

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

225

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

None

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

12,924

Convert vacant lots to monarch habitat.

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.

.72

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)

2

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

9321 28th St W & 3400 Pennsylvania Ave S, St. Louis Park, MN

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

0

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

9321 28th St W was converted in fall 2023 and 3400 Pennsylvania Ave S was converted in 2022. We have contracted with a ecological restoration company to do establishment maintenance to these plots. Year one is mowing 2-3 times during the growing season, year two is weed management and one mowing, year 3 is weed management. Burning will likely take place year 3 or later depending on available fuel.

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

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

21

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

Our Nelson Park community garden has a pollinator pocket garden under the park sign. This was planted in 2020 (estimated) but is maintained multiple times annually.

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

None

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)

2

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

We have a pollinator sign printed that is to be installed this year at our monarch pollinator garden near the entrance to our recreation center and water park. This was created by our design staff at the city and printed by a local company. It is approximately 24' x 36". There is also a pollinator information sign that the city maintains near a water retention area near the Minnehaha Creek that runs through the city were pollinator plants were placed in 2020. This is also approximately 24' x 36". It is along a paved trail that is heavily utilized.

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.

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.

This is not a written policy.

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

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The natural resources manager has directed the city landscape staff to utilize native plants that include ones with high nectar value and well as graminoids for additional habitat in any new landscape gardens or areas that are being refurbished. This is current standard operating procedure.

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

We have engaged with muliple neighborhood groups as well as 2 of the local Rotary Clubs to assist with this on public lands.

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

St Louis Park Rotary; St Louis Park Schools; Good Shepherd School, Golden Valley; Other metro area schools: Holy Name of Jesus School, King of Grace School, Robbinsdale Spanish Immersion, School of Engineering and Arts, Blake School; Family programs; Westwood Hills Nature Center “Adopt-a-Plot” volunteers.

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)

Planted a pollinator garden with St Louis Park Rotary; “Adopt-a-Plot” volunteers maintained 25 restoration 10’ x 10’ restoration plots.; School field trips

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.

.07

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

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Autumn Trees and Apples; Honeybees; How Plants Grow

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

Installed fencing around planted areas to protect from deer.; Staff and/or volunteers maintain areas every two weeks to remove unwanted plant species and check on fencing; Watering as needed for new plantings.

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).

1000 students and 50 educators

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)

16

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

St Louis Park Rotary St Louis Park Schools (9 schools) Good Shepherd School, Golden Valley Holy Name of Jesus School King of Grace School Robbinsdale Spanish Immersion School of Engineering and Arts Blake School

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