City of Elizabeth

Elizabeth, NJ

Public Information Officer Ruby Contreras

Pledge Summary

The City of Elizabeth, in partnership with Groundwork Elizabeth, will distribute pollinator plants at our annual plant giveaway, accompanied by educational materials on how to create and sustain pollinator gardens and their critical role in supporting monarch butterflies. In addition, we will provide coloring books and activity pages to approximately 2,000 second-grade students who visit the farm each year. These materials are designed to teach students about the monarch butterfly life cycle, migration journey, and the importance of planting pollinator-friendly species. Each participating class will receive a milkweed plant to take back and establish at their school garden, reinforcing hands-on learning and habitat creation. groundwork Elizabeth also supplies milkweed plants to over 200 community gardens county wide. To further enhance the experience, as classes visit the farm, Mayor Chris Bollwage will host a monarch butterfly release event with older students, offering a memorable, place-based learning opportunity that highlights conservation in action.

Action Items Committed for 2025

Communications and Convening

- 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.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- 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).
- 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.

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- Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.

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.
- 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
Public Information Officer Ruby Contreras	2025	12/9/2024	
Mayor Chris Bollwage	2023	2/16/2023	Signatories
Mayor J. Christian Bollwage	2022	3/31/2022	

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.).

2000

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.)

1500

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.

1

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.

GWE Microfarm (3/4 Acre urban teaching farm)

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

yes

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

POur urban Agriculture program supports the building of pollinator gardens, milkweed giveaways and this program is a perfect fit.

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?

We can always use printed materials and of course milkweed plants

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

Groundwork Elizabeth has built polinator gardens all over the city and will conmtinue to do so. Our MicroFarm is also a Monarch Weigh Station through the Monarch Watch program.

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.

Groundwork Elizabeth, 30 plus elementary schools in Elizabeth 60 plus county wide. City of Elizabeth (City Hall/DPW) Union County parks & rec Elizabeth Board of Education

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

Groundwork Elizabeth maintains and plants our gardens year round

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).

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40

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

Groundwork Elizabeth

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

Monarch Watch, University of Kentucky

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?

Groundwork Elizabeth

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 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.

Groundwork Elizabeth will continue to grow and distribute Milkweed along with educational materials to support the benefits.

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

This is an ongoing project and will continue as long as we have recourses to maintain the 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.

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).

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45

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

Groundwork Elizabeth

When did this challenge take place?

Last Spring

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.

1

Please describe your challenge and the results.

The city has added polinator gardens to the list of available gardens built by Groundwork Elizabeth. As they build these gardens they provide education and educational materials to support these gardens

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.

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

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

GWE works with over 180 community gardens throughout Elizabeth and Union County. We do a large plant giveaway every year and we support these gardens year round.

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

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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.

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

GWE stewards a community garden grant program through Union County where we build and maintain community gardens throughout the city and county. In 2026 we built 32 new gardens and maintained 180 community and school gardens.

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

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

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

IMG_8995.JPG

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

IMG_9003.JPG

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

15000

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

400

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

Groundwork Elizabeth Inc

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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).

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

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

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

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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)

The Groundwork Elizabeth 2nd Grade School program

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)

60

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

Elizabeth Board of Ed (30 plus elementary schools) 25 schools throughout Union County as part of Union County Plants a Seed Community Grant program

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

Free vegetable plant starts, Education Curriculum on Urban Ag and any Information packs or sheets on Gardening to support their gardens

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).

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1800 students 50 Educators

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

Groundwork Elizabeth

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.

1

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

Groundwork Elizabeth provides support, schools require maintenance personal top maintain gardens as well

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

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

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

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

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

Groundwork Elizabeth

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

Complete

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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.

Last year Groundwork Elizabeth grew anbd distributed over 750 milkweed plants throughout Elizabeth NJ and greater Union County

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

Complete

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