# City of Houston

Houston, TX

Mayor Sylvester Turner

## Pledge Summary

The City of Houston is the largest city in Texas and fourth-most populous city in the United States with over 2.3 million residents. Houston is situated in the convergence of the piney woods and the gulf coast prairie, with 10 major bayous and waterways leading to Galveston Bay. Mayor Sylvester Turner has committed to protecting the monarch butterfly and other pollinators through actions taken by City of Houston staff to propagate and plant milkweed plants, establish and restore native habitat, and engage the community in monarch conservation.

## Action Items Committed for 2022

### Communications and Convening

- 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.

### 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.
- 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

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

## Past Pledge Archive

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| Mayor Name | Program Year | Pledge Date | Achievement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mayor John Whitmire | 2026 | 4/7/2026 | |
| Mayor John Whitmire | 2025 | 3/24/2025 | Leadership Circle |
| Mayor Sylvester Turner | 2023 | 3/23/2023 | Leadership Circle |
| Mayor Sylvester Turner | 2022 | 2/3/2022 | Leadership Circle |
| Mayor Sylvester Turner | 2021 | 1/22/2021 | Signatories |

## 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.).**

550

**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.)**

25 youth, 525 adults

**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.**

11

**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.**

City of Houston Parks

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

We have several prairie restoration sites that support monarchs and pollinators located in low-income or communities of color communities, including at Hobart Taylor Park, Clinton Park, Stuart Park, and Blackhawk Park.

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

The City of Houston is dedicated to the restoration and protection of natural areas and wildlife within the city, including the monarch butterfly.

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**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?**

Guidance on community outreach

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

This year the City of Houston passed a nature preserve ordinance. This ordinance will preserve high quality natural areas within city parks, including several prairie habitats that provide habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators and wildlife.

## Selected Action Items

### 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.**

### 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.**

The Urban Garden Program within the Houston Parks and Recreation Department oversees 13 community gardens throughout Houston. The Urban Garden Manager is in the Natural Resources Division and encourages the participating community gardeners to plant pollinator beds alongside their vegetable beds and to use native milkweed.

### 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.**

City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department, Friends of Franklow Park, Westbury Community Garden

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

HPARD purchases wildflower seeds every year and selects areas within parks to create wildflower patches. These sections of parks are primarily open lawns, which are typically mowed on a 21 day cycle. During the wildflower blooming season, mowing is paused. This allows for pollinator habitat to grow and for reduced fossil fuel emissions. The Friends of Franklow Park and the Westbury Community Garden also participate in this program by seeding additional areas of city property.

## 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.

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

Texas Master Naturalist, Gulf Coast Chapter.

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

HPARD hosts a bi-weekly plant propagation volunteer workday at our native plant greenhouse. These volunteers assist HPARD staff in growing native grasses and wildflowers for our prairie restoration projects. These plants include nectar plants and milkweed.

## 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)**

274

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

274

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

HPARD attended Houston Public Works' Water Works Festival on May 7th, 2022. We gave away 274 native pollinator plants to Houstonians.

## Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.

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**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)**

A demonstration garden is located at the City of Houston City Hall Annex Building (located at 900 Bagby St, Houston, TX 77002). This garden is visible by those visiting the building as well as from Walker St.

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

N/A

**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.**

0.06

## 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.**

140

**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.**

The City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department Natural Resource Division has five prairie restoration sites, totaling 140 acres. At these sites, HPARD is maintaining native forbs and grasses that support wildlife, including monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Native milkweed species, including green milkweed and aquatic milkweed, and other native pollinator plants have been seeded and planted in each prairie. Invasive species are removed regularly by staff, volunteers, or contractors. Removal methods include hand removal, mechanical removal, and spot herbicide treatment.

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

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

NaturalResources_NaturalArea_Policy.pdf

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

N/A

**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.**

04-05-2021. Available at: https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/pdfs/NaturalResources_NaturalArea_Policy.pdf

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

N/A

## Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

130

**What species were collected or propagated?**

Multiple species of native forbs and grasses that support monarchs and other pollinators, including green and aquatic milkweed.

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

Texas Master Naturalist, Gulf Coast Chapter volunteers

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

HPARD collects milkweed and other native prairie plant seeds and propagates them in our greenhouse. Annually, HPARD grows approximately 12,000 plants for prairie restoration initiatives. Seeds are mostly collected by HPARD Staff from other prairies in the greater Houston area. Occasionally volunteers help collect seeds at the Sylvan Rodriguez prairie monthly volunteer workday. Additional volunteers assist with plant propagation at a bi-weekly plant propagation volunteer workday at our native plant greenhouse and a monthly volunteer event at a second nursery location.

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