City of Houston

Houston, TX

Mayor John Whitmire

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 numerous major bayous and waterways leading to Galveston Bay. Mayor John Whitmire is committing to protect 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 2025

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- 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 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).
- Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.
- Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.
- Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

Communications and Convening

- 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 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.

Systems Change

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

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Past Pledge Archive

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 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.

25

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

Our community took the Mayors' Monarch Pledge to restore critically endangered prairie habitat native to Houston. We propagate and plant local native species to rebuild these ecosystems, supporting monarchs and other native pollinators. This habitat restoration is key to preserving biodiversity and strengthening our natural environment.

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?

Partnership connections and funding availability is useful and increasing access to those would help to further expand our reach.

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.).

300

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

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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?

We work in parks across the city, many are in low-income and communities of color.

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.)

100

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

We spend significant efforts to manage existing prairie habitat that supports monarch butterflies and other wildlife.

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.

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

a. HPARD Natural Resources Management maintains over 155 acres of prairie habitat that are mowed once per year and oversees that wildflower seeding program that reduces mowing and provides nectar species for half of the year. b. HPARD Natural Resources Management propagates over 10,000 native plant species per year that are planted into native prairies and reforestation projects.

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

NWF Resilience in schools program brought out numerous school groups, Texas Master Naturalists

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.

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

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a. HPARD Natural Resources Management hosts many monthly volunteer events for Master Naturalists, including 3 days per month native plant propagation and 1 day per month prairie restoration. In addition, HPARD hosts regular community planting events to support riparian forest and prairie restoration projects. b. HPARD Natural Resources Management presents at Native Plant Society, Native Prairie Association, Galveston Bay Council, Master Naturalist, and other meetings on the habitat restoration work of the city.

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

Greenhouse workday2.jpg

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

Texas Master Naturalists

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

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

100

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

a. HPARD Natural Resources Management provides plants for giveaways at park events, Houston Public Works waterworks festival, Earth Day, school plantings, etc.

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

500

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

10

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

a. HPARD Natural Resources Management hand collects native seed from remnant and restored prairies across the Houston area and propagates prairie plants, including milkweed, in the HAPRD greenhouse. Approximately 200 milkweed plants and planted into HPARD prairies each year.

What species were collected or propagated?

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Asclepias viridis

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

N/A

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?

HPARD Natural Resources Management team works directly with community volunteers to manage habitat for native wildlife within 35 riparian restoration sites, 6 prairie sites, and 26 Nature Preserves.

What program was launched or maintained to complete this effort? (Please include a link to the program, if possible)

National Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Habitat program

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

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

50

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

HPARD plants native plants in bioswales and pollinator gardens throughout the city.

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

N/A

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.

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200

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.

HPARD Natural Resources Management routinely manages invasive species in over 35 riparian restoration sites with visits at least once annually and 6 prairie sites with frequent invasive species efforts, including mowing, prescribed fire, and selective herbicide application.

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

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

Complete

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

NATURAL AREA ORDINANCE (AMENDED)_1730.1_APRIL 2021.pdf

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.

HPARD implements the Natural Area Ordinance, which allows homeowners to exceed mowing requirements enforced by the Department of Neighborhoods, if they are actively managing native plants on their property.

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

N/A

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?

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a. HPARD Natural Resources Management worked directly with NWF Resilience in Schools team to host numerous volunteer planting events in park prairie restoration sites.

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)

NWF Resilience in Schools

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.

10

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

Place-based learning, plant donations

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

Annual mowing or prescribed fire

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).

90

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)

4

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

Channelview HS, Bellaire HS, Alief HS, Dobie HS

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

4.22.25 Blackhawk Dobie HS 2.jpg

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