Town of Bedford

Katonah, Bedford Hills, and Bedford, NY

Mayor Ellen Calves

Pledge Summary

The Town of Bedford, located in Westchester County just north of New York City, spans nearly 40 square miles, with 26% preserved as open land. Bedford has been at the forefront of environmental action on multiple fronts, including waste management and energy efficiency. The town enforces stringent leaf blower regulations and maintains a pesticide-free policy for parks and highways. Several public display gardens, cared for by town employees and dedicated volunteers, serve as models of sustainable landscaping. Additionally, more than 200 residents have committed their properties to the Pollinator Pathway program, supporting vital habitat for pollinators.

Action Items Committed for 2026

Communications and Convening

- 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.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- 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.
- 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).
- 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).

Systems Change

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- Integrate monarch butterfly conservation into the city’s Park Master Plan, Sustainability Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan or other city plans.
- 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.
- Remove milkweed from the list of noxious plants in city weed / landscaping ordinances (if applicable).
- Launch, expand, or continue one or more ordinances to reduce light pollution to benefit urban wildlife.
- Increase the percentage of native plants, shrubs and trees that must be used in city landscaping ordinances and encourage use of milkweed, where appropriate.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides, or other chemicals that are harmful to monarchs and pollinators and urban wildlife.
- Change weed or mowing ordinances to allow for native prairie and plant habitats.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Ellen Calves	2026	2/8/2026	
Supervisor Ellen Calves	2025	12/17/2024	Leadership Circle
Supervisor Ellen Calves	2023	3/23/2023	

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.

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

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?

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.).

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.

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

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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.)

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

Selected Action Items

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.

Beaver Dam sanctuary Bedford Pollinator Pollinator Pathway Bedford 2030 Bedford Audubon Bedford Farmers Club Bedford Garden Club Bedford Healthy Yards Group Bedford Hills Neighborhood Association Bedford Historical Society Bedford Riding Lanes Bedford Village Free Library Caramoor Center Community Center Northern Westchester Katonah Village Improvement Society Leave leaves Alone Lower Hudson PRISM Mianus River Gorge Rusticus Garden Club Westchester Land trust Westmoreland Sanctuary Bedford Conservation Board Bedford Hills Free Library Fox Lane garden Club Fox Lane High School Science curriculum Hopp Ground Garden Club John Jay Homestead Katonah Elementary School Katonah Village Library Planning Board Tree Advisory Board Wetland Commission Bedford

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

All these organizations engaged in one or more: Native plant displays, native plant and seed hand outs, electrification of the maintenance, environmental protection or restoration, meadow management, tree plantings, invasive plant management, sustainable leaf management, presentations, workshops or other activities.

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

2025_NativeSeedEvent.png

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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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.

management. The Town's Property Maintenance Code was reviewed and discussed, and it was concluded that the existing language allows for native plantings. The Highway Department and the Recreation and Parks Department support reduced-frequency mowing wherever feasible, provided that safety and access to rights-of-way are not compromised. Native trees have also been planted in public spaces throughout the town. A set of regulations is being developed to accompany the town's new wildlife corridor map, and a stricter tree protection ordinance is in preparation. Ten public areas have been officially designated as pollinator habitats and marked with educational signage. The conservation Board got a grant to update their NRI and will be able to map and protect pollinator habitat more precisely together with other important environmental features

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

Untitled.jpg

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

Garden-Tour-sign-e1660066784226.jpg

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

images (3).jpeg

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

images.jpeg

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

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images (1).jpeg

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

images (2).jpeg

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.

This year, the Town of Bedford hosted a weekly native plant giveaway at the TIOLI Shed, a community reuse and exchange center located in one of the town's most underserved areas. The town also purchased hundreds of milkweed (Asclepias spp.) plugs to distribute free of charge, along with Spanish-language educational flyers to make information about native plants and their ecological benefits more accessible to the community. It also hosted their yearly native plant seed event in the Community House at which thousand of seeds are exchanged and given away. The Conservation Board offered several publicly free presentations under which: the Extraordinary Caterpillar. For all these activities other local groups were invited to engage and participate. Partnerships were also created with the libraries, and all three have now publicly assessable pollinator friendly gardens.

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?

Bedford 2030, Healthy Yards, Local Garden Clubs, and local environmental organization (as answered in question 1) While a few schools have embraced a more sustainable approach to their outdoor property and/or have established pollinator or vegetable gardens, much remains to be done. A new Community Center just opened with a low maintenance environment friendly landscaping design. Several churches and new developments have engaged in native plantings

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)

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We have many programs in our town, many of them are ongoing

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?

Healthy Yards and the local Wild Ones Chapter offer free plant material for non-profits

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

Maintenance needs vary by project. Most plantings require at least some basic invasive species removal, either once a year or through shorter, more frequent maintenance visits.

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).

The town is not directly involved in school operations, but it is reasonable to estimate that at least 100 students participate in activities involving pollinator gardens, vegetable gardens, and outdoor after-school programs, such as gardening clubs.

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)

10

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

See above, our town is not directly involved in school operations

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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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?

The Town of Bedford has received several environmental recognitions, including New York State Climate Smart Communities Silver Certification, the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA designation, and the National Wildlife Federation's Mayors' Monarch Pledge Leadership Circle recognition (2025). Bedford has also been recognized as a leading participant in NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities program. In 2026, the New York Association of Towns recognized Bedford as an inaugural Town of Excellence, highlighting its environmental leadership and conservation initiatives.

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

Our latest efforts/accomplishments are the Wildlife Corridor Project and the NRI update

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.

When did this challenge take place?

As mentioned we have a large milkweed plant give away at a weekly event that also offered materials and information about native plant gardening and arranged free private garden consultation

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).

100

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

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

bedford 2030, Wild Ones Lower Hudson Valley, Native Plant Center, Health Yards, Pollinator Pathways, Westchester Pollinators

Please describe your challenge and the results.

The plant give away was a great success and because of it the town has decided to continue the weekly plant swap in the coming year

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?

not applicable

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

not applicable

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

not applicable

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.

The ordinance has been discussed and no updates were necessary, since it already allows for native plantings

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.

not applicable

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

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not applicable

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

not applicable

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

Westchester County has adopted a native plant ordinance and pesticide regulations. Although the Town of Bedford has not formally adopted these measures, it generally follows the county's guidelines and practices. Our town has an account for its plants at a local wholesale nursery which is know for carrying a large amount of natives and nativars. Regretfully, the choice of shrubs is limited to the heavy deer browsing in our area

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.

not applicable

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

not applicable

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

not applicable

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.

All programs as described will be continued.

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

not applicable

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

not applicable

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

not applicable

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?

We strongly feel that monarch conservation is part of larger conservation efforts. There are sufficient communities of common milkweed in Bedford, the biggest effort however is changing the landscaping industry to become part of the pollinator conservation goals.

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

Deer browsing, conventional landscaping practices, and invasive species are the three greatest obstacles to further progress. We believe the Town of Bedford is doing everything within its power to address these challenges, but meaningful and lasting solutions require a much broader, coordinated effort involving residents, landscaping professionals, neighboring municipalities, and county and state governments.

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

The Town of Bedford's 2026 Comprehensive Plan clearly outlines its environmental goals and the actions needed to achieve them. However, the challenges mentioned above—excessive deer browsing, conventional landscaping practices, and invasive species—remain significant obstacles to fully implementing the plan and achieving its objectives. Make the second sentence more directReduce repetition in the final phrase

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.

Ongoing

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Reduce or eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides, or other chemicals that are harmful to monarchs and pollinators and urban wildlife.

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

Pesticide use in New York State is regulated primarily at the state level. The Town of Bedford generally avoids pesticide use, making exceptions only for highly targeted applications or urgent situations where treatment is considered necessary.

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.

not applicable

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

not applicable

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

not applicable

Launch, expand, or continue one or more ordinances to reduce light pollution to benefit urban wildlife.

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

ongoing

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.

The Town of Bedford has a Dark Sky Ordinance, but its current provisions are insufficient to address the growing use of outdoor lighting and its impact on wildlife. The town is currently developing additional regulations that would establish stricter outdoor lighting requirements for properties located within designated wildlife corridors.cne

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

not applicable

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

not applicable

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