City of Watertown

Watertown, MA

City Manager George Proakis

Pledge Summary

Watertown is a city in the greater Boston area with a population of just over 35,000. Our community, though highly urbanized, boasts important natural resources, from protected open space along the Charles River to our growing number of pocket parks and community gardens. City Manager George Proakis has committed to protecting and promoting pollinator species such as the monarch butterfly by signing the Mayors' Monarch Pledge and looks forward to engaging residents, businesses, and neighborhood groups on the importance of providing pollinator habitat throughout the city.

Action Items Committed for 2023

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 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 developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.
- Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.
- Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.
- Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

Systems Change

- Change weed or mowing ordinances to allow for native prairie and plant habitats.
- Increase the percentage of native plants, shrubs and trees that must be used in city landscaping ordinances and encourage use of milkweed, where appropriate.

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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.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
City Manager George Proakis	2026	3/9/2026	
City Manager George Proakis	2025	3/11/2025	Leadership Circle
City Manager George Proakis	2024	1/4/2024	Leadership Circle
City Manager George Proakis	2023	3/29/2023	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.).

230

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.)

230 adults, 0 youth

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.

0.47

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.

Habitats are being created in residential yards, school gardens, community gardens, and parks.

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

Leveraging the MMP program to engage marginalized communities through different actions: City social media (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram), collaborating with the Watertown Community Garden (non-profit organization) and Friends of Bees (citizen led group), and collaboration with the schools.

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

Continued outreach and education on regenerative landscaping as part to promote native plants and increase biodiversity

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?

Mayors Monarch Pledge library has been helpful.

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

This was the first year implementing the MMP program.

Selected Action Items

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.

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

DPW pollinator garden.jpg

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

Watertown Community Gardens Friends of Bees Watertown Pollinator Pathways (sub-committee of WCG)

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

Collaborated with the non-profit groups, Watertown Community Gardens and subcommittee group – Pollinator pathways group and Friends of Bees, who have been working on removing invasive plant species such as Black Swallow Wort and planting native plants across different locations in the City. Ongoing going work that the Watertown Community Gardens has been doing in collaboration with the Department of Public Works planting on City owned spaces (parks and rec and schools) and traffic deltas and right of ways/sidewalk areas (bump out/curb strips).

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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.

New development/redevelopment projects encourage applicants to include pollinator gardens as part of landscaping/open space. Launched a Citywide pollinator GIS map (ArcGIS online) to display where current locations have pollinator plants/gardens and future areas: a. Municipal pollinator gardens b. School gardens (see action item #9) c. Community gardens (part of Watertown Community Gardens) d. Bump outs/curb strips (part of Watertown Community Gardens) e. Deltas and traffic islands (Department of Public Works)

Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

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

Watertown Public Arts & Culture Committee (staffed by Liz Helfer) has a two-year grant from MAPC Accelerating Climate Resiliency focusing on pollinators and programing.

How many individuals were engaged in this effort? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only, e.g. 50).

0

Please describe the community art project that was implemented in your community and how it contributed to cultural awareness and recognition (e.g., number of art installations, type of art).

• Public call for art closed in September 2023 – for artist designed signs focused on pollinators and to be installed at the new Middle School garden in spring 2024. • 5th graders (400-500 hundred students) will do botanical drawing as part of their science curriculum – their drawings will be made into plant ID signs for use in all school and community gardens, planned for spring 2024 • Garden at the middle school – installed this spring/summer 2023 • Summer Garden Internship for six middle and high school students over eight weeks at Hosmer, Lowell, and Middle School gardens. Pilot season in Summer 2023 with second season 2024, schools to take over program after. • Watertown Free Public Library will host six lectures over two years on topics related to gardening, environmental impact, and climate resiliency. Lecturers include: a. Eric T. Fleischer: He is a national leader in the field of sustainable horticulture and was the former director of horticulture at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy in lower Manhattan. Fleisher brought this 37-acre oasis of parkland on the Hudson River to the forefront as the only public garden space in New York City to be maintained completely organically. He is continuing to

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develop protocols to help landscapes recover from the 20th century's chemical interventions. He is a frequent lecturer on sustainable practices and serves as a consultant for some of the top institutions in the country (Loeb Fellowship). b. Jennifer Tucker: Jennifer Anne Tucker received her Master of Fine Arts degree in Photography from Penn State University. Jennifer has been a practicing herbalist and flower essence practitioner for over twenty-five years. She is a frequent guest teacher and author of Poulticing with Plant and Evelyn's Way. c. Peter Del Tredici: From his website: I am a horticulturist and a botanist who has worked for Harvard University since 1972, both at the Harvard Forest and at the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. Over the past 15 years, my work has focused on urban ecology and the important role that plants play in making cities more livable for all their inhabitants. Author of Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast: A Field Guide.

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

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

City of Watertown has a non-profit Community Garden group that has been instrumental in the pollinator gardens in collaboration with DPW. DPW has a program, Adopt an Island (traffic islands and medians), that was implemented in 2019. This action was taken this year to maintain previously installed gardens in medians and right of ways. The program has a select number of traffic deltas and islands where volunteers (with conditional approval from the Department of Public Works) can plant approved plant species including native plants.

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

0

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.

n/a

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

n/a

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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0

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

In collaboration with the Friends of Bees, a non-profit citizen led group, shared with me that this was happening. This was posted on the City's social media

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

Shared with the residents about the Monarch Blitz for residents to share their observations about monarch butterflies and milkweed.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

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 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).

Launched a few public communications through City of Watertown's social media pages: 1. April - News about City Manager signed the Mayors Monarch Pledge on 3/20/23 on City's social media. 2. June - Pollinator week in June and to share with residents about Black Swallow Wort and its harm on Monarch Butterflies. 3. July/August – Monarch Blitz for residents to share their observations about monarch butterflies and milkweed.

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

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

Watertown Department of Public Works

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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.

Policy was implemented in 2012

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

City of Watertown Department of Public Works implemented a departmental policy for municipal property (open space and recreation): a. Have eliminated the use of pesticides since 2012. b. Use organic fertilizer since 2016, in all fields.

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