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 2024

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 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.
- 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.

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.).

956

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.)

50

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.

0.5

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.

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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.

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?

Year 2 with the MMP – increased efforts to continue working with community groups (Friends of Bees and Watertown Community Gardens).

Selected Action Items

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 public communications through the City of Watertown's social media pages: i. March – Shared the City Manager repledged the Mayors Monarch Pledge on 3/21/24 on the City's social media ii. July/August – Monarch Blitz for residents to share their observations about monarch butterflies and milkweed. iii. Created artist-designed garden signs for each public school garden, used as teaching tools for students at all grade levels.

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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.

Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and associated opportunities to create monarch habitat.

a. New development/redevelopment projects encourage applicants to include pollinator gardens as part of landscaping/open space. b. Launched a Citywide pollinator GIS map (ArcGIS online) to display where current locations have pollinator plants/gardens and future areas. i. Municipal pollinator gardens ii. School gardens iii. Community gardens (part of Watertown Community Gardens) iv. Bump outs/curb strips (part of Watertown Community Gardens) v. Deltas and traffic islands (Department of Public Works)

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

final pollinator lawn sign_page-0001.jpg

How many garden signs are being displayed and where are they located? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

20

Please describe the educational information on the sign(s), and provide any links to externally purchased sign(s).

a. Liz Helfer has a two-year grant from MAPC (Accelerating Climate Resiliency) focused on pollinators and programming (Edible Watertown: Garden Program) (3 to 4 signs at the schools). b. Created lawn signs using artwork created through the Garden Program for residents to display their pollinator gardens within visible areas along City Right of Ways including bump-outs or planting strips (18 signs are placed on residential properties).

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

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.

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

Friends of Bees, a working group of Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice, and the Environment; and Watertown Pollinator Pathways, a committee of Watertown Community Gardens.

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

a. Collaborated with non-profit groups: Friends of Bees, a working group of Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice, and the Environment; and Watertown Pollinator Pathways, a committee of Watertown Community Gardens. Friends of Bees educates about Monarch Butterflies and other native pollinators. Watertown Pollinator Pathways helps residents garden for Monarch Butterflies and other native pollinators, both at home and in public pollinator gardens. This collaboration included: • meeting with Friends of Bees and Watertown Pollinator Pathways in March to brainstorm how our non-profits could support the Mayors Monarch Pledge in our upcoming Life-Friendly Garden Tours. • Including Friends of Bees and Watertown Pollinator Pathways in the design process for the artist-design pollinator signs for gardeners to place in their home gardens and bump-outs. • Supporting Watertown Pollinator Pathways in the block party for removing Black swallow-wort at participating home gardens. b. Ongoing maintenance, such as removing invasive plants and adding native milkweeds and other plants, in public pollinator gardens that Watertown Pollinator Pathways have been doing in collaboration with DPW planting on City-owned spaces (parks and rec and schools) and traffic deltas and right of ways/sidewalk areas (bump out/curb strips). c. Friends of Bees and Watertown Pollinator Pathways held two Life-Friendly Garden Tours, in which residents showcase gardening without using chemical pesticides, fertilizers, or herbicides. The June Tour focused on the Mayors Monarch Pledge, and provided suggestions for milkweeds and nectar plants. The information shared is still available here. d. Highlighted the role of pollinators as part of the Edible Watertown: Garden Program by the Public Arts & Culture Committee, particularly in the Summer Garden Internship program for Watertown middle and high-schoolers.

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.

Developed an online GIS map through ArcGIS online that displays pollinator and native plants for different categories – schools, community gardens, city right of ways, and delta/traffic islands. The purpose of the online GIS map is to eventually have areas across the City have pollinator habitats and increased biodiversity for pollinator species.

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

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

Watertown's Department of Public Works has an Adopt an Island Program that was implemented in 2019. 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

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).

20

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

Friends of Bees and Watertown Community Gardens

When did this challenge take place?

Spring and Fall 2024

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.

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0

Please describe your challenge and the results.

Worked with the Friends of Bees and Watertown Pollinator Pathways subcommittee to create lawn signs to bring awareness that not having a lawn provides a pollinator habitat for pollinator species with the message of the signs is that pollinator gardens may look “untidy” at times. They are especially useful for planting strips and front yard pollinator gardens.

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).

319

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

Friends of Bees

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.

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.

Estimated within 5 acres, about 1 to 2 acres has been treated to remove invasive plants (in progress).

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.

a. Watertown Pollinator Pathways subcommittee of the Watertown Community Gardens held an educational invasive plant removal workshop focused on residential properties and helping residents to be more aware of invasive plant species such as Black Swallow Wort.
b. With support from the Department of Public Works, Watertown Pollinator Pathways held

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regular invasive removal days on the Greenway, removing invasive plants, such as Black Swallow Wort, and adding native plants, such as milkweeds and nectar plants.

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

City of Watertown

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

In proposed zoning amendment changes as design guidelines to include pollinator-friendly gardens for commercial new and re-development projects.

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?

Public Arts and Culture Committee

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).

139

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).

Throughout 2023-24, the Edible Watertown: Garden Program by the Public Arts & Culture Committee used an interdisciplinary approach with art to highlight and engage residents of all ages with the issue of pollinator habitat and local ecological impacts. The project included a call for art, botanical drawing with all Watertown 5th graders, a Summer Garden Internship for middle and high school students, and a lecture series of nationally renowned experts in environmental topics.

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