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 2025

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 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.
- 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.
- Create a community-driven educational conservation strategy, initiative, or practice that focuses on and benefits local, underserved residents.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

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

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pollinator-friendly native nectar plants (i.e., National Wildlife Federation’s Schoolyard Habitats program and Monarch Mission curriculum).
- Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides, or other chemicals that are harmful to monarchs and pollinators and urban wildlife.
- Launch, expand, or continue one or more ordinances to reduce light pollution to benefit 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.).

1392

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.)

0

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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.

This year, habitats have been created in more Right of Ways and a monarch garden was created in one of the Watertown Community Garden plots.

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 3 with the MMP – increased continued 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.)

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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: 1. March – Shared the City Manager repledged the Mayors' Monarch Pledge on 3/12/25 on the City's social media 2. June - Shared about collaboration with Watertown Community Gardens and the City for Black Swallow Wort Removal Event. 3. July/August – Monarch Blitz for residents to share their observations about monarch butterflies and milkweed.

Engage with community garden groups and urge them to plant native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants.

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

2025%20WCG%20Annual%20Meeting.pdf.pdf

Please describe the groups you engaged with and how you engaged with these groups below.

Watertown Community Gardens handed out seed packets at City-hosted event, EcoFest, on May 10, 2025. Watertown Community Gardens at Arsenal Park opened in late spring/early Summer. One of the plots in the Community Gardens includes a Monarch Pollinator Plant plot.

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.

n/a

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

n/a

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.

Watertown Community Gardens.

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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. Community Gardens and subcommittee group – Pollinator Pathways group and Friends of Bees, who held the 28th Life Friendly Garden Tour focused on a day of exploring vibrant, chemical-free gardens in and around Watertown, while sharing stories and learning from the dedicated gardeners who maintain them. Ongoing 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).

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.

Continued work to have new development/redevelopment projects encourage applicants to include pollinator gardens as part of landscaping/open space. Ongoing Citywide pollinator GIS map (ArcGIS online) to display where current locations have pollinator plants/gardens. - Municipal pollinator gardens - School gardens - Community gardens (part of Watertown Community Gardens) - Bump outs/curb strips (part of Watertown Community Gardens) - 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?

n/a

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).

n/a

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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 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)

n/a

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)

0

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

n/a

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

n/a

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).

0

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

n/a

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.

0

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

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n/a

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)

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

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).

3361

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.

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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?

City of Watertown Department of Public Works

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

0

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

Watertown's Department of Public Works hired a specialized landscaping team to do maintenance on rain gardens and pollinator gardens on City owned parcels.

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 linear area - about 1 mile

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.

1. 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.
2. With support from the Department of Public Works, Watertown Pollinator Pathways held 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.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

9

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

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Continued program for residents to sign up to acquire a lawn sign for residents to display their pollinator gardens within visible areas along City Right of Ways including bump-outs or planting strips.

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

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.

n/a

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

n/a

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?

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.

Watertown’s Department of Public Works does not apply herbicide as a form of treatment on City owned property. Watertown’s Health Department does not use SGAR for rodenticides to manage rodent population on City owned property or Right-of-Ways.

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

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.

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.

Existing ordinance language for dark sky compliance requires new or redevelopment to incorporate dark sky compliance lighting into designs. Link: https://ecode360.com/37103437

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.

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.

Incorporation of design guidelines to include pollinator-friendly gardens for commercial new and re-development projects.

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.

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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.

Incorporate native plants, shrubs, and trees that must be used in city landscaping practices and to encourage the use of milkweed, where appropriate either in open space design, wetland permitting projects, or re/new development projects.

Create a community-driven educational conservation strategy, initiative, or practice that focuses on and benefits local, underserved residents.

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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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.

Black Swallow Wort (BSW) neighborhood removal event, June 22, 2025, in collaboration with the Watertown Community Gardens. Prior to the event, an online survey went out to the general public for those who were interested in participating in the event and who had BSW on their property. From the survey, a select area of properties that had BSW was identified, and permission from property owners was obtained before the event. During the event, a total of 5-10 volunteers work at 2-3 properties to remove BSW.

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