Lexington Fayette Urban County Government

Lexington, KY

Mayor Linda Gorton

Pledge Summary

Lexington and Fayette County are located in the Inner Bluegrass Region of Central Kentucky. The Lexington Fayette Urban County Government is a merged city/county government that serves the citizens of this community. Lexington is the 2nd largest city in Kentucky and is considered cultural hub for the region. Agriculture and tourism are key industries to the area as we are known as the Horse Capital of the World and internationally known for the Bourbon produced locally. Without pollinators these industries that are part of the cultural identity of the Bluegrass State wouldn't exist. Lexington hopes to lead the way for our neighbors across the state in promoting and protecting vulnerable pollinator habitat.

Action Items Committed for 2023

Communications and Convening

- Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.
- 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.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.
- Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.
- Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.
- 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).

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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.
- Host or support a monarch butterfly festival that is accessible to all residents in the community and promotes monarch and pollinator conservation, as well as cultural awareness and recognition.
- Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

Systems Change

- Change weed or mowing ordinances to allow for native prairie and plant habitats.
- Integrate monarch butterfly conservation into the city's Park Master Plan, Sustainability Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan or other city plans.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Linda Gorton	2026	12/23/2025	
Mayor Linda Gorton	2025	1/22/2025	Leadership Circle
Mayor Linda Gorton	2024	1/22/2024	Leadership Circle
Mayor Linda Gorton	2023	2/3/2023	Leadership Circle
Mayor Linda Gorton	2022	1/31/2022	Leadership Circle
Mayor Linda Gorton	2021	2/8/2021	Leadership Circle

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.).

1787

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.)

These numbers are estimates since ages weren't recorded at larger events: Youth - 957 / Adult - 830

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.

10

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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, green spaces, Fayette County Public Schools, rights-of-way, residences

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

Using the Mayor's Monarch Pledge, officials within Lexington are connecting with collogues and community members across our city to connect monarch and pollinator projects. In 2023, programs were held at Community Centers by Parks Neighborhood Nature Programs in areas where the population is primarily communities of color. These programs installed 4 community gardens in those locations which included planting Milkweed and having pollinator programming. That program leader also held a community Garden Party that had activities and partnering agencies in attendance that educated participants in sustainable gardening and using native plants. Through the guidance of the Mayor's Monarch Pledge, city officials have partnered with Celebrate Lexington a local group that supports gardening and native plant propagation. The group will be installing and maintaining a pollinator demonstration garden at Charles Young Park which is located in Lexington's historic East End, an area of prominence for Lexington's African American community.

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

Lexington is a community that is focused on preservation and restoration of historic and ecologically sensitive sites. Lexington's Division of Parks and Recreation as well as the Division of Environmental Services within the cities government have prioritized creating native habitats in parks and greenspaces. The Mayor's Monarch Pledge provides guidance and connection to a larger community of likeminded municipalities like ours that hope to restore natural spaces.

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?

Having the action items as annual goals has been very beneficial. Having these annual goals has led to partnerships with community organizations and the development of a Monarch themed festival that will be held annually. Additional webinars or professional development opportunities offered by the program would be helpful to the staff that manages the program. It would be helpful to hear from communities that have achieved Champion level status to better see how they have integrated the Monarch Pledge into their community.

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

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For the first time, Lexington has hosted a community wide Pollinator Week in June 2023 to promote and educate the public on pollinators. This weeklong event was planned by multiple agencies and the Mayor's Monarch Pledge was a topic of discussion regularly at the planning meetings. Lexington Parks and Recreation hosted several program and events during that week, including a kick off event that had over 200 people in attendance. Multiple community groups held garden tours, guided walks, workshops, and created self-guided activities that were held across our city during that week. The goal of the planning committee is to host this event annually moving forward. Also, for Action item #20, the project at Lakeside Golf Course to install pollinator habitat and remove invasive plants was supported by the North American Butterfly Association Lexington Chapter as well as the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife. The section would not let me update to save that information.

Selected Action Items

Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.

Date of Proclamation:

June 19, 2023

Title of Proclamation (i.e. – Monarch Day or Pollinator Week):

Pollinator Week

Upload a copy of your proclamation.

proclamation .jpg

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

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

BBBG.pdf

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

Lexington Parks and Recreation

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

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in progress

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

The Bring Back the Bluegrass program was created in part to reduce mowing in Parks and increase native habitat. This will be an ongoing project that Parks manages with no "completion date" in mind. The areas that have been included in the program will continue to be managed and maintained in the future to remove non-native plants and encourage native habitats.

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.)

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

2022 PBN Front 1 full sun asymmetrical (1).pdf

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

RRposts.png

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

monarchfieldguide.png

Please describe the methods of public communication below (e.g., printed materials, social media, print media).

Live Green Lexington, a program operated by the Division of Environmental Services, operates a program called Plant by Numbers that encourages citizens to plant natives in their garden. Attached is one of the many templets that are available for free that uses the idea of "paint by numbers" to show even a novice gardener how to plant an amazing native garden. The plans use native plants and many of the plans include milkweed species in the templet. The team that administers this program has created a "game" version that they take out to events to allow participants to create their own garden using game pieces. The plant by numbers program is available for free on the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government's website at: https://www.lexingtonky.gov/plant-numbers-0. Lexington Parks and Recreation also posts information about pollinators via their social media platforms. The Park Naturalist at Raven Run Nature Sanctuary includes pollinator information in their regular social media posts.

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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.

Celebrate Lexington July 6th 2023 Minutes.pdf

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

Celebrate Lexington is a local group that was formally the Lexington Chapter of America in Bloom. The group supports gardening projects and plant installations across our community. Parks and Recreation staff attended the groups June 2023 meeting to discuss native pollinator habitat installation project opportunities. Steven Rogers gave the group an overview of the Mayor's Monarch Pledge and discussed ways they could support the initiative which includes promoting their Purple Cone Flower Seed giveaways. The group did not share their June meeting minutes but did share July minutes which does reference the Mayor's Monarch Pledge and other collaborations in the "Old Business" section.

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.

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

BBBG.pdf

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

Lexington Parks and Recreation Lexington Rotary Club Friends of Dogwood Park

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

Lexington Parks and Recreation created an initiative called Bring Back the Bluegrass, the goal of the program is to take under used green space in Parks and convert it to native habitat. Several locations within Parks have been designated as Bring Back the Bluegrass sites and steps are be taken now to convert those locations into native habitat which includes pollinator habitat. Mowing has been reduced in Bring Back the Bluegrass sites as native plants have been installed. Parks has partnered with different community groups to support these sites such as the Lexington Rotary Club which has installed a pollinator garden at Kenawood Park. The Friends of Dogwood Park have installed native trees, removed invasive plants, and installed pollinator plants. More info about the program can be found at: https://www.lexingtonky.gov/bring-back-bluegrass

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

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

kickoff2.png

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

Milkweed Plug Care.docx

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

MonarchFest.jpg

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

over 100 packets of native seeds and 4 dozen native pollinator plant plugs at Monarch Fest and Pollinator Week Kickoff Event.

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

1173

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

Lexington Parks and Recreation, Live Green Lexington, Celebrate Lexington, the University of Kentucky, Fayette County Extension Office

Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.

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

larva.png

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

citynaturechallenge.png

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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).

20

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

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife

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

McConnell Springs Park hosted volunteers from the Monarch Larva Monitoring program this year. Park staff worked with volunteers that would regularly come to the park over the summer months and checked milkweed plants for monarch larva. McConnell Springs also hosted several iNaturalist workshops which taught participants how to use their smart phone to record plants and animals they see in nature. During Monarch Fest, 20 monarch butterflies were tagged and released as part of a public program. Lexington Parks and Recreation partnered with FloraCliff Nature Sanctuary, a privately managed natural area in Fayette County, to plan and host they 2023 City Nature Challenge. This encouraged citizens to use iNaturalist to get out in nature and record plants and animals that they saw.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

sign in park.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).

Currently, it is unknown how many educational signs are displayed in Lexington's parks, greenways, and along trails. No central group manages the installation of signage and no inventory has been performed. It is most likely that there are dozens of locations with pollinator signage. The attached image was installed at Dogwood Park in 2023 by the Friends of Dogwood Park via funds from a grant that the group received. Any information added to Parks signs is vetted by Parks Planning and Design department prior to installation.

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Integrate monarch butterfly conservation into the city’s Park Master Plan, Sustainability Plan, Climate Resiliency Plan or other city plans.

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

Masterplan.docx

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

Lexington Parks and Recreation

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.

This action item was complete in 2018 - https://www.lexingtonky.gov/about-parks-and-recreation-master-plan

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

Milkweedseedpackets.pdf

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

0

What species were collected or propagated?

Common milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, butterfly milkweed

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

Lexington Parks and Recreation

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

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Staff from Lexington Parks and Recreation Natural Areas collected seeds from natural area sites throughout the community. Seeds were separated into bags, labelled with the attached sticker, then given out at Nature Centers and events. The events included: Monarch Fest, Lexington Pollinator Week Kickoff Event, and the Bluegrass Birding Festival.

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).

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

aug 12 flyer.pdf

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

growing together outline.pdf

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)

Neighborhood Nature Programs - Growing together

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)

5

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

Dunbar Community Center Kenwick Community Center William Wells Brown Community Center Tates Creek Community Center

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

NA

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).

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200 students

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

Food Chain

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.

.1

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

Park staff is working with community center staff to maintain the locations.

Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.

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

Charles Young Park Community Garden Application approved.pdf

Where is the demonstration garden located and how does this location relate to the cultural significance of the monarch (if relevant)? (Please provide an address or coordinates, if possible)

Charles Young Park, 215 Midland Ave, Lexington, KY 40508 . The garden will be located in a park named for Charles Young, a prominent African American serviceman that was born in Kentucky. CY Park is located in Lexington's Historic East End neighborhood, an area with significant importance to the Lexington community due to the abundance of African American history of the area. Recent additions to the park and surrounding neighborhood have served to make Charles Young park a significant hub for surrounding residents and businesses.

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

Celebrate Lexington and Urban County Council member Tonya Fogle

What is the size of the demonstration garden (in acres)? 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.

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.1

Host or support a monarch butterfly festival that is accessible to all residents in the community and promotes monarch and pollinator conservation, as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

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

MonarchFest.jpg

How many estimated individuals attended the event? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field ((Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only), e.g. 500)

1172

What was the date of your festival?

September 23, 2023

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

Lexington Parks and Recreation, Live Green lexington, Wild Birds Unlimited, North American Butterfly Association Lexington Chapter

Please describe the details of your monarch butterfly festival and how you ensured the event was accessible by all residents in the community (e.g., events, length, notable successes, outreach, location).

The festival was held at Raven Run Nature Sanctuary which is Lexington's largest city Park. The event was free and open to the public, it was held from 10am-2:30pm to allow for as many people as possible to attend. Activities included monarch tagging, iNaturalist tutorials, native plant and seed give away, live insect displays, games, crafts, guided nature walks, and speakers.

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

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

beforeremovalLS.jpg

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

after removal invasives on bank in section 1.jpg

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

IMG_7972.jpg

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

waverly.jpg

What is the total acreage of land treated to remove invasive plants? Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

It is estimated that over 32 acres of invasive plants have been removed.

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.

Lexington Parks and Recreation regularly removes invasive plant species across the 100+ park locations that the Division manages. Some highlights from 2023 include: Hisle Farm Park - Volunteers from the Lexington Chapter of Wild Ones have had regular volunteer work days at this former horse farm turned natural area park. During their work days they remove invasive Bush Honeysuckle and Pear trees from meadows where the plants have started to crowd out wildflowers. The group has mostly used a cut stump herbicide method to treat the stumps of the plants. Waverly Park - The Friends of Waverly Park have had several work days to remove invasive Winter Creeper from woodland edges. They have used hand pulling and broadcast spraying depending on the season and location. Raven Run Nature Sanctuary - Regular invasive species removal has been ongoing at Lexington's largest park. Projects included improving warm-season grass stands onsite by adding black-eyed Susan's and other forbs and removing invasive lespedeza. McConnell Springs - Regular public volunteer programs were scheduled that focused on removing invasive Bush Honeysuckle from woodland edges. Volunteers would work with staff using manual removal methods to pull the plants from the ground. Native trees and shrubs were planted back in these areas and priority was given to planting shrubs that would be host plants for pollinators. Staff also removed large sections of invasive plants using large equipment and in some areas the cut stump and herbicide treatment methods were used. Lakeside Golf Course - We have started a project at Lakeside to the right of #1 tee but it’s not completed yet. We have seeded it this fall and it should be completed this spring. Also, we did put a riparian zone in to the right of the 2nd hole. That project was done by The Friends of Jacobsen Park. They were awarded a $10,000 grant from KY American Water to help with funding. The group removed invasive species from the edge of the lake on the golf course side and replaced it with plants that are native to Kentucky. Bring Back the Bluegrass - Pollinator habitat plantings have occurred at Castlewood Park, Marlboro Park, Higbee Mill

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Park, and Kenawood Park. Work is on going to install pollinator plants at other location this fall and into the spring of 2024.

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