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 2024

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.
- 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.

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

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- 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.
- 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

- 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.).

2500

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.)

1050

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.

6

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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, greenways, nature sanctuaries, community gardens

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 2024, programs were held at Community Centers by Parks Neighborhood Nature Programs in areas where the population is primarily communities of color. 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. Hundreds of youth participated in this program throughout the summer of 2024.

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 (also within 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 to submit pledge preference each year provides excellent guardrails and measures to follow throughout the year. Any continuing education that allows participants to learn more about what other municipalities are doing and funding opportunities for such would be most helpful.

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

Efforts to protect pollinators continue to grow throughout Lexington and new and innovative ways to educate and engage the public are happening each year. With this year's Art by Nature Program, artists and pollinator protectors alike were engaged in new and exciting ways. The partnerships that have formed through this initiative continue to promote creative approaches to better protecting our pollinator and monarch populations within our city and county.

Selected Action Items

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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 17, 2024

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

Lexington held its second annual Pollinator Week from June 17-23, 2024. The kick-off event was held at the Raven Run Nature Sanctuary on June 17, 2024, and featured a reading of the Mayor Linda Gorton's Pollinator Proclamation and a presentation on the decline and importance of pollinators. A pollinator walk was led by the KY Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association and a proclamation was also read on behalf of Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, declaring the value of monarchs and pollinators to the entire state.

Upload a copy of your proclamation.

MayorsPledgePlaque_2024.jpg

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.

2024_Plant by Numbers Monarch Waystations.pdf

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

Lexington's Division of Environmental Services oversees a program called Live Green Lexington, which is designed to inform residents of what the city is doing to protect the environment and to provide information as to how everyday people can pitch in and help. One program that falls under Live Green Lexington is "Plant by Numbers', which encourages citizens to plant natives in their garden, following the idea of "paint by numbers" that shows how to plant native gardens. The plans suggest using plants native to KY and most include milkweed species. This program is available for free on the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government's website at: https://www.lexingtonky.gov/plant-numbers-0. In 2024, a new monarch way station Plant by Numbers sheet was created and posted on the city's website. The division updated Plant by Numbers booklets in 2024 and has given out over 250 since July of this year. Lastly, the Lexington Senior Center, within

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the Division of Social Services, held a Pollinator Week event for participants to learn about pollinators and native host plants that work best in our geographic region.

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.

Monarchs and Pollinators Bluegrass Neighborhood Association_2024.pptx

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

“Celebrate Lexington” is a local group formerly known as the Lexington Chapter of America in Bloom. The group supports gardening projects and plant installations across our community. Parks and Recreation staff worked with the group in 2024 to promote their Purple Cone Flower Seed giveaway initiative by inviting them to table at the Bluegrass Birding Festival in May 2024, and at the Pollinator Week Kickoff event in June of 2024. For information on Celebrate Lexington, see: https://www.celebratelexington.org/signature-projects. Celebrate Lexington also worked with Parks and Recreation to install a native plant bed at Charles Young Park and used the city’s Plant by Numbers program as a guide for species selection. In addition, Parks staff member Steven Rogers presented to the Fayette County Neighborhood Association in February of 2024 on the importance and decline of monarch populations and pollinator habitat installation in our city.

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.

RR_Agro_2024.jpeg

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

Parks and Recreation; Division of Environmental Services; Friends of Parks; Kentucky State University; Ky Prescribed Fire Council

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

Lexington Parks and Recreation continued the Bring Back the Bluegrass initiative in 2024, with a goal of taking underused green space in Parks and converting it to native habitat. Several locations within Parks have been designated as Bring Back the Bluegrass sites and steps are being taken now to convert those locations into native habitat which include pollinator habitat. Mowing has been reduced in Bring Back the Bluegrass sites as native

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plants have been installed. In 2024, approximately 3¼ acres of pollinator habitat was added in seven Bring Back the Bluegrass sites throughout the city. For more information, please see: https://www.lexingtonky.gov/bring-back-bluegrass. At the Raven Run Nature Sanctuary, the Agroforestry Plot planted in 2023 through a grant with Kentucky State University, was expanded and now measures 0.6 acres and includes elderberries, blackberries, beans, peppers, corn, and pumpkins this fall. Preparations have begun for a 0.2-acre native pollinator garden which will be planted at the agroforestry site in the spring of 2025. Raven Run has also conducted one, 2.5-acre prescribed fire on site in conjunction with the KY Prescribed Fire Council.

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.

Art by Nature_2024.PNG

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

Division of Environmental Services; Parks and Recreation; Living Arts and Science Center

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

New in 2024, LFUCG's Division of Environmental Services held a celebration of all-things pollinators in October of 2024 at Lexington's Living Arts and Science Center. The Division sought submissions for the Art by Nature: Monarch Waystations initiative. Local artists were invited to submit works that were inspired by one of the 20 featured waystations in our city. Visual artists of all kinds were invited to submit their work, which was subsequently hung at the Living Arts and Science Center and presented to the community at a public event in October. 127 pieces of art were received from 95 artists. Over 245 people attended the opening reception WHERE artwork was judged, and awards given out for the top entries. More on this program can be found at: https://www.lexingtonky.gov/news/07-29-2024/art-nature-monarch-waystations-open-submissions. Over 500 native seed packets were given away at various events throughout the summer and fall to promote artist recruitment. Seed packets contained a blend of Monarch Waystation seeds and provided enough to plant a 15sq ft. way station.

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.

pollinator week kick off.jpeg

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

1000+ plant plugs and seed packets

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

850

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

Parks and Recreation; North American Butterfly Association- Ky Chapter; University of KY Cooperative Extension; Celebrate Lexington; Division of Environmental Services; Lexington Greenspace Trust

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 pollinator garden.PNG

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, located in downtown Lexington at 215 Midland Ave, is named for a prominent African American serviceman that was born in Kentucky. The park is located in Lexington's Historic East End neighborhood, an area that has significant importance to our city, due to the extensive African American history in the area. Celebrate Lexington planted purple cone flower, zinnias, and daffodil bulbs in this park in 2022 and Parks has helped to maintain this planting over the last two years. In 2024, the garden was expanded through Celebrate Lexington’s efforts with support from the city’s Parks department and the group used the Plant by Numbers guide generated through the Division of Environmental Services.

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

Celebrate Lexington; Environmental Services

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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0.1

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.

Butterfly Count Results_2024.pdf

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).

75

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

Celebrate Lexington; Environmental Services; Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

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

Over the course of 2024, Parks and Recreation offered several programs focusing on monarch migration and health. Staff worked with the city's therapeutic recreation program participants to plant wildflower seeds and plugs at the Raven Run Nature Sanctuary and participants learned about swamp milkweed and its benefits to pollinators. The Junior Explorers Program taught youth about life cycles of monarchs and explored pollinator gardens to search for monarchs. Butterfly identification was taught in partnership with the Floracliff Nature Sanctuary featuring some of the most common summer butterflies in the Inner Bluegrass region. Participants learned tricks for identification, basic biology of butterflies, and their relationships with native plants. Opportunities for community science projects and resources used for documenting and sharing butterfly observations were also covered. In late September, Parks hosted a monarch tagging event, which is an annual community science event. Participants first learned about monarchs and how scientists study monarch migration and then had the opportunity to help to safely capture, tag, and release monarch butterflies. Additionally, several Parks staff also participated in the annual butterfly count in Fayette County, spearheaded by the Floracliff Nature Sanctuary. It was found that Hisle Farm Park, located on the extreme north side of the city, had the #1 ranking for species diversity and site abundance, while 7 other city parks ranked in the top 13 sites in Lexington for both abundance and diversity. (Attachment includes official 2024 butterfly count results for Lexington).

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

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

CP_prescribed burn 2024.jpg

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

5

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.

The Friends of Jacobson Park worked to remove invasive species from a 0.5-acre pollinator garden that was planted in 2023 at Lakeside Golf Course. The area will be reseeded with native seed by the end of 2024. Friends of Dogwood and Friends of Waverly Park hosted invasive species removal days in both parks, with support from the city's Division of Environmental Services, with over 200 volunteers working to remove callery pear and bush honeysuckle. Chris Poehner, manager of the Raven Run Nature Sanctuary, was given an award in November of 2024 as the leading individual in invasive species removal at the 2024 Invasive Plants Symposium hosted by the University of KY and state government. Chris has completed 3/5 apprentice burns toward his state Burn Boss certification and conducted a 2.5-acre prescribed burn at the Raven Run Nature Sanctuary in the fall of 2024.

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.

Monarch Fest 2024.jpeg

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)

750

What was the date of your festival?

September 22, 2024

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

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Parks and Recreation; Division of Environmental Services; University of KY Extension; North American Butterfly Association

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).

Lexington's Monarch Fest was held this year at the Raven Run Nature Sanctuary at the end of September. The event was free and open to the public and activities included monarch tagging, iNaturalist tutorials, native plant plug and seed giveaways, games, crafts, and guided nature walks. The North American Butterfly Association partnered with Parks and Recreation on the festival and hundreds of participants learned, played, and got to engage with monarchs in a multitude of ways.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

RR sign_people and pollintors.jpg

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

15

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 focusing on pollinator habitat 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. Any information added to Parks signs is vetted by Parks Planning and Design department prior to installation. The Raven Run Nature Sanctuary has a "People and Pollinators" sign designed to highlight phenological changes in landscape and species diversity throughout the year with a goal of having visitors take pictures throughout the year to compare changes throughout the seasons.

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.

Parks 2018 Master Plan.PNG

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

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Parks and Recreation; LFUCG (government in general); stakeholders from across the city

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.

2018

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

This action item was completed in 2018 and remains part of Parks and Recreation's Master Plan, which can be viewed at: https://www.lexingtonky.gov/about-parks-and-recreation-master-plan.

Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.

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

BBBG final.pdf

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

Parks and Recreation; Division of Environmental Services; Friends of Waverly Park; Friends of Dogwood Park; Friends of Parks

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

750

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

Through a grant funded by Columbia Gas, Parks began preparations for a 0.3-acre native pollinator planting at Wellington Park through the Bring Back the Bluegrass initiative. Turf grass kill is ongoing in the fall of 2024 and planting will happen in the spring of 2025. The city's Division of Environmental Services (DES) extended the Wellington Park corridor by installing 1 acre of pollinator meadow in a greenway lot at the corners of Wellington Way and Clays Mill. The division was also responsible for installing a 0.5-acre monarch Plant by Numbers plot at Coldstream Regional Park in October of 2024. DES also assisted the Friends of Dogwood Park in creating 6 new pollinator beds and planting 280 perennial

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plants and 15 trees. This initiative was funded by the Kentucky River Authority and the Friends of Parks. The Friends of Waverly Park planted native wildflowers, including milkweed, in a large pollinator garden at the park in the spring of 2024.

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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