Mount Vernon

Mount Vernon, IA

Mayor Thomas Wieseler

Pledge Summary

Mt. Vernon is a bedroom community of 4527 in east central Iowa. We are home to 1100 student Cornell College and a high achieving school district. We have no big industry but are a Main Street USA community with a vibrant 12 festival calendar of events in our quaint downtown. There is a large focus on all things sustainable from car charging stations, geothermal in our public buildings coupled with solar panels. Many of our residences have solar as well. An active sustainability committee focus's on water quality, no mow May, prairie establishment and pollinator friendly areas.

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.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.
- 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).
- Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation’s Community Wildlife Habitat program).
- Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

Systems Change

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- Increase the percentage of native plants, shrubs and trees that must be used in city landscaping ordinances and encourage use of milkweed, where appropriate.
- 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.
- Remove milkweed from the list of noxious plants in city weed / landscaping ordinances (if applicable).
- Change weed or mowing ordinances to allow for native prairie and plant habitats.
- 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.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Thomas Wieseler	2026	4/24/2026	
Mayor Thomas Wieseler	2025	12/7/2024	Leadership Circle
Mayor Thomas Wieseler	2024	4/7/2024	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.).

25

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

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.

1

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.

Roadsides, yards, right of ways, community garden.

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

Not really relevant in Mt. Vernon due to our high median income and lack of racial diversity.

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

Growing citizen interest, my continued interest in all things sustainable. The donation from 2 parties of land for trails that will also have trail border and/or border prairie beside them.

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?

Your zoom classes, and having a committee member who also works for Linn County Conservation.

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

Just that we are working with Iowa Natural Wildlife Federation to use at least one, if not a second bequest to acquire land for prairie with a trail installation that would all incorporate monarch butterfly conservation.

Selected Action Items

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.

2 info kiosks in different parks are being updated to include a display of sustainability news, including about our butterfly support program.

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

We've already identified public areas to not mow, mow less frequently or to convert to prairie.

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

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

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Don't know.

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

100

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

Town library and our local low income pantry team.

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

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)

A new site was added on the grounds of Seeds of Faith church.

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

SE Linn Community Center, Mt. Vernon's Wellness Center and Seeds of Faith Church.

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.

1

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)

Working with a new school board member and superintendent, seeking to establish a FFA program with the school district.

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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)

1

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

Mt. Vernon High School

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

Farm Bureau and ADM are the main financial providers so far.

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).

When the FFA program is up and going, 50 students are expected to be in the program.

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

School District, Farm Bureau and local farmers.

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?

For 25-26 school year.

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).

New this year, during our spring clean up day, we will have an info table with yard signs for "no mow May" "butterfly safe yard' etc. for citizens to take with them and post in their yards.

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Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Habitat program).

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

We are a Bee City USA City and Trees Forever with Arbor Day Foundation

What program was launched or maintained to complete this effort? (Please include a link to the program, if possible)

We completed forms, like this to get the certification from these groups.

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

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

At our summer festival parade, we hand out seed balls for citizens to use on their property.

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?

Residential developers Skogman Homes and Boomerang

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

In progress as sections of new residential open up

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.

NA

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

As developers are responsible for their greenspaces/waterways until a section is transferred to the city, their mowing process of only two times per season and not before

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July are enforced.

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

Remove milkweed from the list of noxious plants in city weed / landscaping ordinances (if applicable).

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.

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

Our Public Works team and Parks & Recreation Commission.

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

In progress but largely completed.

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.

This is ongoing/a moving target.

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

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