# City of Knoxville

Knoxville, TN

Mayor Indya Kincannon

## Pledge Summary

Knoxville Tennessee is a progressive and rapidly growing city known for the Sunsphere, vibrant arts scene, rich history, beautiful marble, the University of Tennessee (Go Vols!), the Urban Wilderness, and so much more. The Tennessee River runs through the city and provides beauty as well as a space for water sports like fishing, canoeing, and rowing. Knoxville was once the first capital of the state, is the gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, hosted the 1982 World's Fair, and is now the new home to One Knox Soccer and the Knoxville Smokies! Knoxville is in Knox County Tennessee and has about 191,000 residents and is the third largest City in the state behind Memphis and Nashville. The City has also become a leader in Sustainability. We have electric buses, electric fleet cars, charging stations throughout the city, all of our street lights were converted to LED about 5-7 years ago, we have solar panel lots, and we are Certified as a Wildlife Habitat. Conservation and the environment are important to us. Educating neighbors and creating spaces for the Monarch Butterfly is one piece of this work that we are proud to now engage in.

## Action Items Committed for 2025

### Communications and Convening

- Engage with Homeowners Associations (HOAs), Community Associations or neighborhood organizations to identify opportunities to plant monarch gardens and revise maintenance and mowing programs.
- 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 developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.

### Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Convert vacant lots to monarch habitat.

### Systems Change

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

## Past Pledge Archive

| Mayor Name | Program Year | Pledge Date | Achievement |
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|---|---|---|---|
| Mayor Indya Kincannon | 2026 | 2/22/2026 | |
| Mayor Indya Kincannon | 2025 | 4/15/2025 | 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.).**

23

**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.**

We created several test plots, which were all city lots or right-of-way. One was at the corner of Western and Henley, one was around the 11th Street Monument, and there was one off of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

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

With this being our first year working on the Mayor's Monarch Pledge, we had one plot in our marginalized community, but it wasn't advertised. Our work was limited to outreach about the importance of critters like the monarch butterfly, fireflies, bats, and more. We have an almost weekly newsletter that goes out to over 1000 people, and we have included articles on these topics throughout the year. So, it wasn't targeted; however, many people in this community do get our newsletter.

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

Community members requested it and it fit in well with the City's desire to encourage sustainable practices within the City and with folks that call Knoxville home. From one of our Public Services workers, "I had a few different thoughts on why I was intersested. A lot of the urban wildernes is going to more of wildflower areas instead of manicured landscape. We have really struggled with these areas. So, doing this would help us understand the process to establish areas and maintain these types of areas. Another reason was to eventually be able to

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do it on a larger scale to help redue mowing and it would be an alternative to just reforestation. The last reason was to help pollinators not just monarchs but bees also. they are vitally important to keep a healthy ecosystem."

**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?**

The NWF website has been very helpful. Folks have asked us how to help butterflies, bats, and more. I encourage folks to find these resources on your website. One of our Public Service crew members said, "I don't remember where I found all the information. I visited a lot of different sites. I started by researching what Monarchs needed in order to thrive. I then started researching friendly flowers that would allow bloom coverage throughout the growing season."

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

It was definitely a learning experience and a lot of fun. We got satisfaction out of seeing all sorts of butterflies in two of the areas. We plan on trying a couple more locations next year and hopefully we can work with the community more.

## Selected Action Items

### Engage with Homeowners Associations (HOAs), Community Associations or neighborhood organizations to identify opportunities to plant monarch gardens and revise maintenance and mowing programs.

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

We talked to several, but have not been able to get a garden started yet.

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

The Office of Neighborhood Empowerment got the word out on June 10, 2025, in their Neighborly Notice about the Mayor's Monarch Pledge and what the City hoped to do. https://cdnsm5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_109478/File/Neighborhoods/News/2025/Advisory-2025-06-10.pdf Maplehurst group reached out to us and there was a lot of potential for an area along Neyland Drive, but as it turned out, the land was privately owned and the owners intended to build on it in the near future. South Woodlawn wants to do a pollinator garden in Sam Duff Park, but that hasn't been coordinated yet. This might be something to work on in 2026.

### Convert vacant lots to monarch habitat.

**Where is the monarch habitat located? (Please provide an address, if possible)**

Corner of Henley & Western, at the 11th Street Monument, on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, on a Codes lot, and Sequoyah Hills Park near the boat ramp.

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

With this being new, we mainly did trial plots. We engaged several different departments within the City. They were Public Service, Office of Neighborhood Empowerment, Neighborhood Codes Enforcement, Office of Sustainability, and Urban Forestry. Hopefully in 2026 we will be able to engage with more community members, non-profits, and other governmental organizations.

**What is the total acreage of land that has been converted? 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.**

1

**How many lots were converted to monarch habitat? Please limit your answer to only the number of lots in the answer field below (e.g., 3)**

5

**Please describe when the lots were converted to monarch habitat and the planned maintenance schedule.**

The lots were converted in the spring of 2025. These were trial plots for our Public Service workers. They wanted to learn as much as they could about how to maintain these fields without them getting overgrown. There was mixed success. Most of them produced wonderful flowers that brought the butterflies. The goal is to try several more plots next year with a variety of plants in different locations to ensure that the monarch has all that it needs.

## 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.**

Local Natural Landscaping Guidelines.pdf

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

The City partnered with the University of Tennessee to create this new Natural Landscape Guidelines to help homeowners have a natural landscape without getting codes violations. The City also worked on a Landscape quality assurance update to the ordinance. Although it talks about trees, it opens the door for flexibility for more sustainable landscapes. This ordinance passed on August 19, 2025.
https://library.municode.com/tn/knoxville/ordinances/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=1381987

**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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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.**

August 19, 2025

## 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).**

The Office of Neighborhood Empowerment got the word out on June 10, 2025, in their Neighborly Notice about the Mayor's Monarch Pledge and what the City hoped to do. https://cdnsm5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_109478/File/Neighborhoods/News/2025/Advisory-2025-06-10.pdf Maplehurst group reached out to us and there was a lot of potential for an area along Neyland Drive, but as it turned out, the land was privately owned and the owners intended to build on it in the near future. South Woodlawn wants to do a pollinator garden in Sam Duff Park, but that hasn't been coordinated yet. This might be something to work on in 2026.

## Engage with developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.

**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 extent of engagement with these groups and associated opportunities to create monarch habitat.**

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The City owned a large plot of land near downtown that we turned over to Clayton Homes to make a science museum; however, in the spring of 2025, we learned that the property owners were giving it back to the city and were not going to build on it. When we found this out, our Public Service Director asked the developers if they would plant wildflowers on the property until it had a use. They said sure and you will see in the picture that there were cosmos, echinacea, zinnias, and more. It was really beautiful this fall. This helped the butterflies, preserved the soil and was beautiful.

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