

# Planning for equitable climate adaptation

**Communities that have been historically marginalized by land use, lending, and planning policies are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change.**

While many communities across the United States are increasingly exposed to climate catastrophes like hurricanes, wildfires, flooding, and extreme heat, the effects are generally more severe for communities of color, low-income communities, native and tribal communities, people experiencing homelessness, undocumented individuals and families, older adults, and children. Intentionally oppressive practices—redlining, restrictive covenants, and exclusionary zoning—have not only reduced wealth-building opportunities and housing access, they have also put these individuals at greater risk from climate impacts. Equitable climate adaptation can include policies to direct growth, improve data access, deliver much needed affordable housing out of harm's way, and align infrastructure investment with assessed risk.

## Key discussion points

1

**Climate is not either naturally varying or human caused — it's both.** As renowned climate scientist Dr. Marshall Shepherd explains, "Weather is your mood; climate is your personality. Just because it's cold today, doesn't mean that climate change is not real." Climate change is here and now. In addition to the risk of bodily harm and personal economic disaster, the impacts of climate change destroy public infrastructure and interrupt services, disrupt focus and cognitive ability of school children, harm mental health, and contribute to a rise in crime. New technology may enable the repurposing of heat that cities generate; but, it cannot be relied on as a silver bullet to solve this crisis without behavioral change and acknowledgement that climate change is disproportionately impacting historically disadvantaged communities.

2

**Extreme heat is one of the greatest public health threats of climate change, yet is often overlooked.** Los Angeles County's 2021 comprehensive Climate Vulnerability Assessment projects a 10-fold increase over the next several decades, exposing about 2.2 million people to extreme heat, doubling the number of people who are most at risk today... (continued)

## Discussion guides



Day One: Equity Summit keynote



Day One: Land use and development



Day Two: Transportation and thriving communities



Day Three: Economic development



**"Open source and peer reviewed data will help facilitate collaboration within and across communities, allow for better funding for adaptation and mitigation strategies, help in streamlining permitting, and encourage higher levels of civic engagement."**

- Sharai Lewis-Gruss, Director of Data Enablement at First Street Foundation

## What to do next



### Community coalitions

Focus on direct services, policy, and advocacy to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and build grassroots leadership among community members



Yet most cities don't have the data, policies, or procedures in place to take action on extreme heat, and have not considered how existing land use, zoning, and planning strategies can respond to and protect communities from extreme heat. While Miami-Dade County now has one of the first Chief Heat Officers in the world, the county has relied on "citizen science" to collect heat and humidity data around the community and advocate for action.

3

### Millions of households and property owners are unaware of the true risks they face from the impacts of climate change.

Data on the current and expected impacts of climate change is increasingly publicly available, but is not always incorporated into local land-use policy, planning, or household financial decision-making. Increasingly, public federal sources and nonprofits such as the First Street Foundation are making this data more available and easily accessible. Data that is free, easy to understand, offered for multiple geographies, and accessible on commonly used platforms like FloodFactor.com, Redfin, and Realtor.com is critical to improve the public's understanding of risks from climate change.

## Questions to ask

1

What climate hazards pose the greatest risk to your community? How are you taking climate risks into account in your work?

2

Climate change is a threat multiplier. What is your community doing to lessen the impact of climate change on those who already face the greatest challenges in your community?

3

What barriers exist in your community to implementing data-generated climate solutions?

## What to do next



### Planners and practitioners

Determine which data sources are needed to better understand climate impacts in your region. Embed this climate science into land-use planning, training, and outreach initiatives. Work closely with community members to more deeply understand the risks faced and determine what policy solutions, infrastructure investments and housing solutions are needed.

### Real estate developers

Incorporate climate science and climate risk into planning for future development projects. Ensure that new construction is prepared for climate impacts such as sea level rise, increasingly frequent storms, and extreme heat.

### Everyone

Reduce personal carbon footprints, and vote climate to hold leaders accountable. A focus on individual action without an emphasis on policy change can cloud the need for corporate, governmental, and collective action to scale the response, vote climate and engage, and hold leaders on both sides of the aisle accountable

## Recommended reading



**The Race Awakening of 2020: A 6-Step Guide for Moving Forward**  
by Dr. Marshall Shepherd

An inflection point in society may have finally been reached: meaningful discussions are being had about race. Read how we can move the needle beyond social media activism and superficial activities.



**LA County Climate Vulnerability Assessment**

This report provides a solid foundation from which the County and other local municipalities and organizations will be able to more effectively plan for a resilient, sustainable, and equitable future.

**CATALYST**  
MIAMI

**Catalyst Miami Tool Library**

This tool offers resources to ignite community driven progress through capacity building, climate justice, coalition building, economic justice, health justice, and housing justice.