



The Network
for Public Health Law

Law and Policy Pathways: Community Adaptation to Climate Change

Community adaptation is a process communities utilize to lessen the impacts of climate change locally. Community adaptation policies provide cooling and shade, reduce air and water pollution, mitigate the effects of flooding, and reduce health disparities. Implementing effective community adaptation policies that center health equity involves more than public health departments – it involves housing, energy, transportation, parks and recreation, and other agencies, with **community engagement in each step of the process**. Community adaptation will continue to be critical to ameliorating the health impacts of climate change and combatting environmental injustices.

Sustainable Housing and Built Environment

Install [energy-efficient heat pumps in public housing facilities](#) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and associated health risks for low-income residents.

Protect youth health and safety by implementing [cooling interventions in schools](#).

Utilize [Community Benefit Agreements](#) requiring that developers engage with communities historically excluded from development decisions and harmed by environmental injustice.

Educate tenants on their rights to protections from extreme heat (e.g., [air conditioning](#)), including enforcement and remedies for failure to provide these protections.

Add [augmented cooling centers](#), to libraries and other existing public infrastructure.

Help managers of affordable multifamily buildings meet [energy performance standards](#).

Clean Energy

Increase state and local government incentives for individuals and businesses investing in renewable energy technologies; and cost recovery through [Direct Pay](#).

Provide support for [training, networking, and other strategies](#) to reduce barriers to participation in the renewable energy workforce and business sector.

Encourage states to adopt/expand [Renewable Portfolio Standards](#) or [Clean Energy Standards](#), mandating a significant portion of energy come from renewable sources by specific future dates; and prioritize [funding streams for energy burdened households](#).

Support [community-driven](#) renewable energy initiatives and ensure equitable distribution of clean energy benefits.

Prohibit [utility shutoff](#) for nonpayment of bills during periods of extreme heat.

Green Transportation

Develop safe and inclusive [infrastructure for walking and bicycling](#), such as protected bike lane networks, by consulting communities to ensure infrastructure is accessible.

Reduce reliance on cars and promote access to affordable transportation through investment in [electric public transit](#) that is equity-driven.

Leverage funding opportunities to [promote connected communities](#) and rectify racial injustice and isolation resulting from inequitable transportation policy.

Transition to [electric school buses](#) to promote healthy and sustainable transportation for students.

Develop [resilient transportation systems](#) that can withstand climate change-related natural hazards, while seeking community input to avoid displacement and gentrification.

Natural Environment

Increase regenerative agriculture practices such as healthy soil initiatives and planting climate tolerant crops through [task forces and action plans](#).

Improve [storm water management systems](#) through natural solutions to reduce the risk of flooding and improve water quality.

Implement water reuse strategies to mitigate drought impacts, such as the City of Austin's [GoPurple program](#).

Prioritize [community engagement](#) in the green planning process, centering input from underserved and at-risk communities.

Build and improve public green spaces, including parks, green schoolyards, green roofs, and [urban tree canopies](#).

Incentivize planting native and pollinator-friendly plants in residential lawns through [individual support grants](#), workshops, and planting guides.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Review or collect [climate and natural hazard risk data](#) to inform policies, and ensure the data is readily available to community members.

Establish community resilience hubs, such as the [Resilient Eastside Initiative](#) in Detroit; support on-site solar energy production and battery storage for power outages.

Pass state legislation to [require local climate action plans](#) with meaningful community engagement early on.

Consult the [National Heat Strategy](#), to prepare frontline communities and formerly redlined neighborhoods for extreme heat and access federal funding and assistance.

Take steps to [increase adaptation capacity in rural health departments](#).

Consider adopting the [Model Clean Indoor Air Act](#) to increase knowledge of and ameliorate the health impact of threats such as wildfire smoke.

If you have questions about this topic or would like to learn more about the Network, please contact Jill Krueger at jkrueger@networkforphl.org.