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Community Climate Resilience




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Stopping climate change is the top environmental priority, but it's too late to focus exclusively on prevention. From heat waves to hurricanes, communities are already experiencing the extreme weather impacts of our changing climate. Around the world, civic leaders are working to make their communities more resilient in the face of climate change and increasingly common environmental disasters. Resilience planning requires governmental involvement, but it's most effective when communities are engaged in the process – and sometimes even leading it.

Impacts of Climate Change

Communities around the world are experiencing the [impacts of climate change](#). More frequent and severe heatwaves have resulted in [tens of thousands of deaths](#). Environmental changes have caused [diseases transmitted](#) by

mosquitoes or water to become 10% more infectious, while new [zoonotic](#) diseases continue to emerge. Higher temperatures also increase [smog](#), which combines with [wildfire smoke](#), contributing to respiratory illnesses. In 2022, extreme weather events cost the United States alone [\\$155.1 billion](#).

Urban Resilience

[Climate resilience](#) refers to the ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The World Bank published a [report](#) that outlines six principles for improving climate resilience:

1. Rapid and inclusive development of infrastructure, financial services, health care, and social protection. Lack of access to these basic services indicates climate change vulnerability.
2. Support for individual and business adaptations. Not everyone can obtain [housing above the flood zone](#) without assistance.
3. Sustainable land use plans and critical infrastructure. Land use planning can prevent [desertification](#) and reduce disaster risk. When [power grids](#) or transportation systems are vulnerable, entire communities are vulnerable.
4. Recovery strategies. Because disasters cannot be avoided entirely, effective response systems are critical.
5. Macro-level impact management. Coping with climate change impacts across sectors requires strategic planning at the highest levels.
6. Prioritization based on needs. It's tempting to focus on what's easy to accomplish, but resilience depends on tackling the most relevant [regional risks](#).

Top-down initiatives like improved [building codes](#) and zoning, and improving the [electrical grid](#) are required. But as historical efforts like [urban tree-planting projects](#) have proven, environmental initiatives cannot succeed without community engagement. Resilience involves building [local food networks](#) to reduce reliance on distribution networks, as well as strengthening those distribution systems. In fact, given the gridlock at the higher levels of government, grassroots initiatives are often the most successful.



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Community Engagement

A few communities are already leading the way to [urban resilience](#). The Eastwick neighborhood of Philadelphia is a classic case of [environmental injustice](#). One of the city's most flood-prone neighborhoods, [Eastwick](#) is also burdened by its proximity to an airport, two major highways, a closed oil refinery, and a landfill. But as rising sea levels lead to increased flooding, the city is shifting its approach from disaster recovery to resilience, communicating with residents through regular public meetings and an emergency alert system. They are working to connect residents with flood insurance as well as resources for flood preparedness and other environmental topics. On the other side of the country, [Climate Resilient Communities](#) works to empower under-resourced communities in the Bay Area to advocate for resilience and collaborate with leaders in climate change planning.

Community-led urban resilience can take many forms. Green infrastructure improvements are critical to resilience. Community groups may advocate for greener public projects, while individuals may [shop for more resilient homes](#), or make their own homes to [more resilient](#) by upgrading their [roofing material](#). Agroecology projects can range from private [vegetable gardens](#) to [urban farms](#) and [farmer's markets](#). Cohousing and [ecovillages](#) require a major commitment from a handful of individuals. But easier aspects of the sharing economy, for example sustainable transportation supports like communal bike garages, also build community resilience. [Community solar](#) is another grassroots climate resilience initiative. Around the country, local community groups that work on land use issues, habitat restoration, and even poverty alleviation are all contributing to climate resilience.

Community Resilience Resources

The [Community Resilience Planning Guide for Buildings and Infrastructure Systems](#) is a publication of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The guide sets out a six-step planning process for building community resilience over time. EPA's [Environmental Resilience Tools Wizard](#) is an online resource designed to help communities find resources to meet environmental needs. Although both of these tools are designed for use by officials, the information they provide can be invaluable to community activists. Contact your local city or county council or planning department to find out if they use the guide and encourage them to do so.

[Community-Driven Climate Resilience Planning](#) is a framework document for community-based organizations developing, advocating for, and implementing climate solutions. The [U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit](#) provides resources to help both community leaders and private businesses make long-term plans that account for climate change.

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