

STORIES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Act on Climate



Co-sponsored with the Department of Geography and Urban Studies, Stories of Sustainability connected the Temple Community with local community voices, scholarship, and policy to explore different strategies to organize and govern for a just climate future and seek to fulfill Temple's urban mission.

- Heat Response & Creative Action for Philly's Rising Temps
- Struggle Space to Green New Deal: Recognizing Past Racial and Environmental Injustice to Inform Urban Climate Justice Policy
- ICLEI & Local Climate Action Planning in the Commonwealth

In this collection, find curated discussion guides from these events and a TU Sustainability blog summarizing the lectures and accompanying campus conversations.

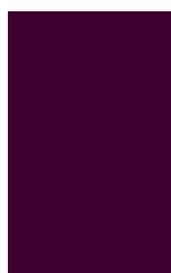




HEAT RESPONSE & CREATIVE ACTION FOR PHILLY'S RISING TEMPS



Through Temple's engagement with Heat Response and this Office of Sustainability event, we listened to community voices and helped creatively amplify local populations' lived experiences to drive policy change and achieve equity across Philadelphia neighborhoods in response to rising temperatures. Participants gained an understanding of the social justice dimensions of extreme heat and urban climate change and joined a conversation with student leaders to create a space to imagine a just and abundant future with insight and tools from the PHL Office of Sustainability equity framework, community wisdom, the creative arts and cultural practice.





CREATIVE ACTION FOR PHILADELPHIA'S RISING TEMPERATURES

GOALS

- Gain an understanding of the social justice dimensions of extreme heat and urban climate change
- A conversation with student leaders to create a space to imagine a just and abundant future with insight and tools from the PHL Office of Sustainability equity framework, community wisdom, the creative arts and cultural practice.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explore the social justice dimensions of extreme heat
- Causes and the disproportionate impact on low-income communities, communities of color as well as the impact on health, safety, and daily lives of individuals
- Develop basic skills and knowledge applying methodological tools for analysis of social problem
- Further understanding the roles of Temple and public agencies and model climate leadership
- Build community and fellowship in collective struggle
- Discover resources, avenues and pathways for action and creative resistance
- Engage in peer education

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are some ways that students can get involved in heat response efforts in their community?
- A crucial factor in the historical and continued disinvestment of communities who are most vulnerable to extreme heat has been a lack of community control over the institutions in their neighborhoods. How can the community members, scholars, and policymakers collaborate to secure community control over the heat response institutions we create?
- From the local government's perspective, what are best practices for organizing community arts to drive policy change? From the organizer's perspective, how can local governments support grassroots organizers?
- Anchor institutions like Temple University may be situated in communities but often lack community representation in institutional decision-making. How can we reimagine anchor institutions to represent growing community needs in the face of the climate crisis?
- When organizing community art to drive policy change, are our projects speaking to community members or to policymakers? What are some examples of these two audiences being synthesized respectfully and effectively? What are some mistakes that we can learn from?

DISINVESTMENT IN PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITIES.



Southeast Philadelphia Park.

Evident in the name, global warming is driving hotter days in many parts of the world. But that heat isn't felt equally. In Philadelphia, decades of racist lending practices by private banks and the federal government, called "redlining," along with continued

disinvestment have created conditions for some neighborhoods in the city to be 22°F hotter than other areas of the city at times. The consequences are, all too often, fatal for people who are isolated and elderly, and will only get worse as the climate crisis worsens.

There is a great need for equitable heat response systems throughout Philadelphia. But what does equitable heat response look like? How can we prepare our communities for the crises to come? This past Friday, Temple's Office of Sustainability hosted a mini-panel for Stories of Sustainability Act on Climate: Heat Response & creative action for Philly's rising temperatures to begin answering those questions and more.

One panelist, Cheyenne Flores of the City's Office of Sustainability, shared information on the City's Beat the Heat: Hunting Park program along with her reflections on best practices. Billy Yalowitz, our other panelist and professor in Temple's Community Arts Practices program, shared an overview of Heat Response PHL, which is engaging with three Philadelphia neighborhoods to tell their stories on how they deal with extreme heat.

PHILLY'S HEAT RESPONSE.

As we dove into best practices for individuals, both panelists highlighted the importance's of building long-lasting relationships with neighbors, educating yourself on available resources, and participating in community organizations. That looks like knowing how to apply to the state's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), saying hello to your neighbors, asking around how you can get involved in your community, and more.



William Cramp Elementary School.

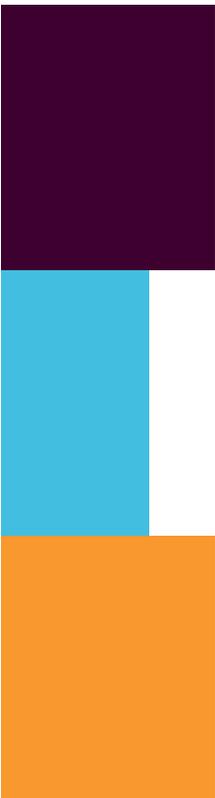
As for the organizations of larger heat response systems, Chey and Billy stressed the importance of honoring and supporting community leaders while resourcing programs with sustained commitment at their helm. Success in heat response projects cannot be measured in a few months or one summer, but over several years and even decades.

Then there is the reality of historical and continued oppression. "There are reasons," Billy said, "that folks coming from City Agencies and Universities are not trusted when we walk into these neighborhoods. We shouldn't be... There's a history to overcome." Those histories, like Temple University's history with North Philadelphia, are often painful and must be accounted for whenever we speak of equity or justice.

In any case, heat response in one neighborhood will look different from heat response in another. Each community has its own unique histories, beauties, and challenges. Our responses should reflect that uniqueness. But we know it can be done.



STRUGGLE SPACE TO GREEN NEW DEAL: RECOGNIZING PAST RACIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE TO INFORM URBAN CLIMATE JUSTICE POLICY



Tina, Megan, and Russ reconciled and remembered the past, worked to address environmental, racial, and social injustice, and planned for climate justice by connecting present and future community needs with the Green New Deal framework. Our speakers' collective scholarship, critical perspective, and organizing skill explained and informed policy and activist responses to the climate crisis, meeting this moment and prioritizing the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.





STRUGGLE SPACE TO A GREEN NEW DEAL

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Make space for community voices to drive climate justice policy and achieve equity in North Philadelphia

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are some ways that students and faculty can mindfully get involved in intentional organizing and activism?
- What would “community control” over Temple look like? What alternative economic, social, and political institutions would have to be created? How might existing institutions be transformed?
- Most of us are calling from stolen land. Temple’s main campus is located on the land of the Lenni-Lenape. How does our restructuring of this institution to commit wholeheartedly to climate justice intersect with indigenous rights and land back organizing? What might this look like in practice?
- Temple’s growth and expansion has come directly at the expense of the North Philadelphia community, directly displacing thousands during the era of urban renewal while relying on market gentrification to displace tens of thousands in more recent years. At what point does climate justice require anti-growth policies and the contraction of Temple University as an institution?
- Temple is a sprawling institution with tens of thousands of students, faculty, and staff whose policies impact hundreds of thousands, particularly already marginalized communities in North Philadelphia. Yet, all major policy decisions are made 36 people on the

board of trustees, most of whom are much old, rich, White cis-men who don't live in North Philadelphia. How can we politically restructure the administration of Temple University so that the interests of students, faculty, staff, and the community are fairly represented?

STRUGGLE SPACE.

At the center of the event was the term “struggle space.” Panelist and professor in Temple’s GUS department, Christina Rosan, explained that the term was coined in passing by an African-American cab driver of hers to describe the systemic injustices, he and his community faced: “they got us in this struggle space.” The term clicked and Rosan has since used it to describe historic and continued spaces of racialized disinvestment.

What does the struggle space look like in Philadelphia?

Rosan and fellow panelist and colleague, Megan Heckert, shared an equity index they had developed to help map out the struggle space in Philadelphia. The index serves as the compilation of three other indexes on environmental needs, amenity needs, and areas of socio-economic disadvantage, along with information on existing resources in communities, like schools.



Left: one neighborhood in Philadelphia with all three indexes at visualized at once, along with yellow areas for schools in the neighborhood; Right: three maps of Philadelphia, each visualizing the struggle space of neighborhoods with the indexes of environmental needs, amenity needs, and disadvantage across the city.

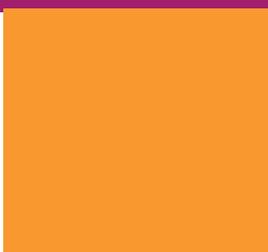
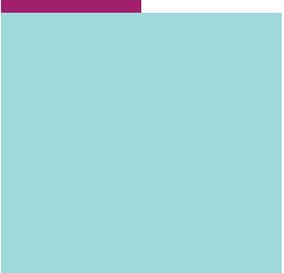
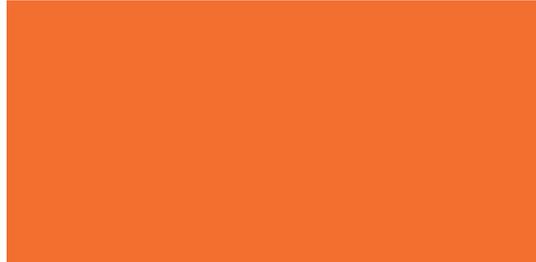
This index is a helpful tool to help quantitatively identify degrees of needing reinvestment across Philadelphia, including resources on which type of reinvestment those neighborhoods may need. That being said, any process of community reinvestment must also include authentic conversations with community members, allowing them to name their needs and design the reinvestment themselves wherever possible.

STRUGGLE SPACE TO A GREEN NEW DEAL.

Rosan, Heckert, and every other panelist stressed the need for climate action to take equity-based approaches. “Climate planning is doomed to fail,” Rosan said, “if it does not address the struggle space.” In other words, before we talk about a Green New Deal, we need to acknowledge the “Raw Deal” that communities of color in Philadelphia have had and still have.

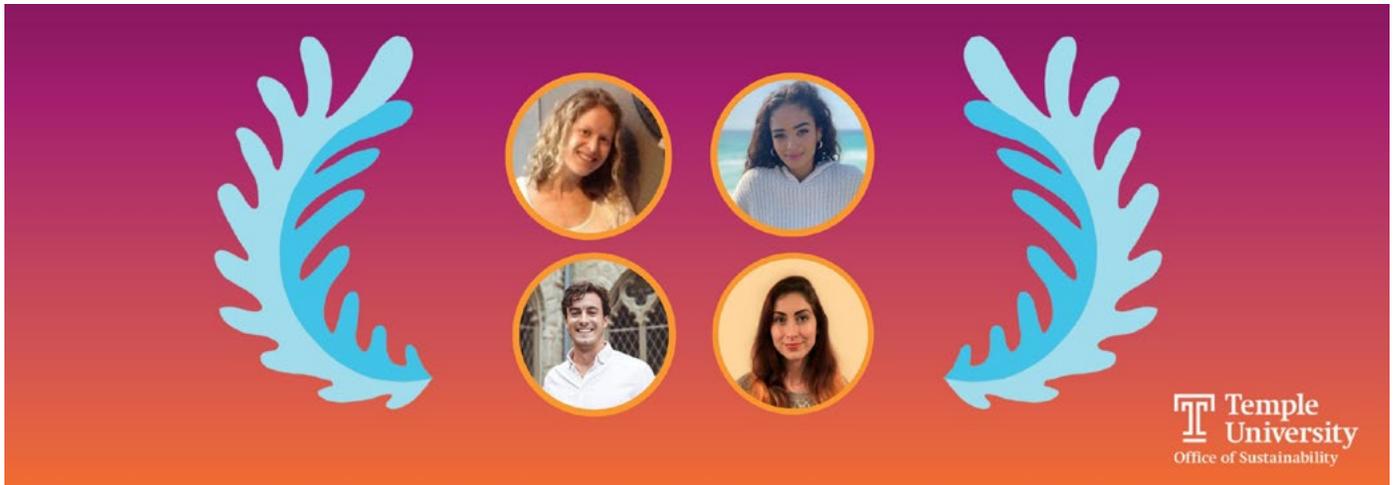
In Philadelphia, this means acknowledging the history of planning as blatantly discriminatory and racist and simultaneously taking bold action to right those wrongs, urgently addressing issues like rapid gentrification and “green gentrification” that hit communities of color hardest.

The history of this city, and indeed this country, are inseparable racial injustice. We cannot change the past. We can, however, acknowledge it, learn from it, and start creating a city that finally works for all of us for today and every day to come.



ICLEI & LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING IN THE COMMONWEALTH

We spotlighted not only PA DEP's Local Climate Action Program, but the experiences of the students participating in the ICLEI internship and their role as climate leaders on their home campus and in their communities. The event gave attendees a sense of the function of the 2018 Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan as a critical piece of climate policy and what it looks like in practice in local municipalities across the Commonwealth.



STUDENTS & LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING IN PENNSYLVANIA

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learn about opportunities for students to participate in state and local climate policy
- Further understanding the roles of Temple and public agencies and model climate leadership
 - Build community and fellowship in collective struggle
 - Discover resources, avenues and pathways for just governance and sustainable community engagement
 - Engage in peer education
- Identify careers in climate action and policy

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

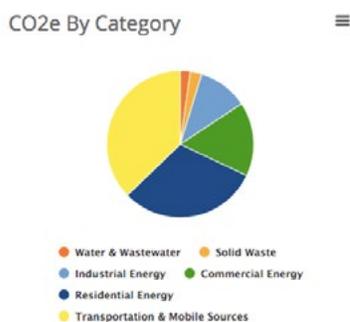
- What is the recruitment process and cycle?
- What are some policy/governance strategies to account for/evaluate environmental justice principles?
- How do you create a plan that aligns with Pennsylvania's environmental initiatives?

How can college students take climate action in local government? This question is at the core of the Local Climate Action Program (LCAP) under the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The program matches college students with local governments across the state, then trains both of them through a DEP contractor, ICLEI USA, on how to develop a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory and climate action plan for that government.

The program's most recent cohort included three Temple students, so our Office of Sustainability sat them down to discuss their experiences on Earth Day in Stories of Sustainability: ICLEI & Local Climate Action Planning in the Commonwealth.

CREATING A GHG INVENTORY.

After being accepted into the program, the three students, Mark Costanzo, Nicole Somers, and Jada Ackley, received training from ICLEI on creating a GHG inventory tool in Fall 2020. These GHG inventories, as explained by Mark, are lists of emissions sources in the municipality (like homes, energy plants, transit systems, etc.) along with how many CO₂ equivalents they emit. These inventories provide crucial information on setting goals of emissions reductions in the later climate action plans.



Pie chart of carbon-dioxide equivalents emissions by category for Warwick Township

Students compiled data from local utility companies, transit sources, waste facilities, and more to build these inventories, and soon found that GHG inventories looked different in different places. For example, transportation and residential activities were the major contributors in Warwick Township, PA, the government with which Mark Costanzo collaborated on LCAP.

LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING.



Students and local governments received additional training in Spring 2021 to create their climate action plan (CAP). These plans, as explained by fellow student Nicole Somers, were meant to reduce GHG emissions while preparing for the impacts of climate change. Accordingly, CAPs include GHG mitigation targets, objectives, and actions, like changing town ordinances to require energy efficiency standards on new buildings, alongside adaptation actions, like

expanding green spaces and incorporating climate change vulnerability assessments into future construction plans. Lastly, they developed a monitoring plan to keep track of reductions going forward.

The third student, Jada Ackley, discussed the importance of community engagement in any CAP. On one hand, they explained, it helps governments gather information from residents for the plan, but also fosters community support for it. For some examples, Jada used surveys and community workshops to engage residents on what a CAP for Haverford Township needed to include.

GETTING INVOLVED.

In her closing remarks, Heidi Kunka, Energy Programs Specialist at DEP and overseer of LCAP, discussed the importance of getting a diversity of perspectives in climate action planning and invited students to fill out an interest form if they may want to apply next year. If you're interested, check it out!

Everyone has something to gain from fighting climate change, and something to lose from letting it run unchecked.



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