

South Florida Climate Change Equity Solutions Summit
Miami, Florida
held at the Frost Science Museum
June 10th, 2017, 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

On June 10, 2017, CAP, the CLEO Institute, and Catalyst Miami held a Climate Equity Solutions Summit in Miami, Florida. The goal of the summit was to transform the concerns and ideas of under-resourced communities in Miami-Dade, Broward, Monroe, and Palm Beach Counties into actionable and equitable recommendations to help shape the update of the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Action Plan, or RCAP 2.0. The four counties and their municipalities will use the RCAP 2.0 for the next four years as their guide to reduce the region's climate change pollution and build resilient communities. The recommendations that emerged from the summit offer strategies for county and city leaders, advocacy groups and residents in underserved areas to strengthen capacity, leadership and resilience in overburdened communities at the front lines of climate change effects.



The approximately 40 attendees included community leaders, concerned citizens, representatives from grassroots organizations, RCAP 2.0 authors, the Miami Foundation, and current and former county and city leaders and their staff. Notable attendees include: Daniella Levine-Cava, Miami-Dade County Commissioner; Dwight Bullard, former Florida state senator; Cindy Lerner, former Mayor of Pinecrest, Florida; and the resilience leads from the Cities of Miami, the Counties of Miami-Dade and Broward, and the City of Miami Beach. Attendees discussed how climate change threatens communities in the four-county region, particularly in low-income areas and communities of color, and specific policy recommendations and actions that the RCAP 2.0 should embrace to address historic inequities and build just, empowered and resilient communities. The meeting was facilitated by the President of Sustainable Miami/SMIA Group Maggie Fernandez.

The group heard presentations on engaging communities, climate change risks and the RCAP 2.0 process, including:

- A keynote by former Florida State Senator Dwight Bullard, who is currently the Political Director of the Florida New Majority Education Fund, pictured above right. His talk centered on understanding historic inequities, discriminatory policies, and injustice in South Florida. Mr.

Bullard emphasized that, “as we develop solutions, we need to check who is in the room, and identify who is missing, and why.”

- A conversation with Susy Torriente, Chief Resiliency Officer and Assistant City Manager of the City of Miami Beach. Ms. Torriente shared the history of the RCAP and opportunities for the RCAP 2.0 to be more inclusive and equitable.
- A discussion with Nicole Hefty, Miami-Dade County Deputy Resilience Officer, that outlined the timeline and new additions to the draft RCAP 2.0, and noted that the RCAP will have “a chapter on equity, and that equity will be woven in throughout the document.”
- A conversation with Caroline Lewis of the CLEO Institute, center picture above, about historic community inequities and concerns over more heat waves, flooding and other climate threats.
- A discussion with Zelalem Adefris of Catalyst Miami about the health risks of climate change, particularly in already overburdened and under-resourced communities.

Priority Recommendations for RCAP 2.0

Summit participants broke into workgroups to identify actionable recommendations for the RCAP 2.0 to reduce the disproportionately high risk of climate change disruptions in low-income communities and communities of color, many of which stem from historic inequities. The workgroups tackled four issues: transportation, clean energy, emergency management, and sustainable communities. These four topics were chosen by attendees via a poll shared with participants upon registration for the summit.

After the workgroups developed their recommendations on white boards, a local spokesperson from each group presented the recommendations to all summit participants. Following these presentations, participants selected (via red sticker dots) their top three priority recommendations. Summit attendees’ top 5 priorities for inclusion in RCAP 2.0 are described below. The full list of recommendations developed by the workgroups is provided in Appendix A.

Improve Emergency Preparedness:

1. City and county leaders and staff, in partnership with community groups, should create a “Climate Corps” to provide more safety and preparedness training for emergencies. Under this program, community residents would be trained to help network neighborhoods to share emergency and safety information (e.g., by establishing phone trees, etc.), identify mental health issues, and administer basic first aid. This program would provide residents with temporary employment and stipends to support emergency response (e.g., like New York City’s [snow removal employment programs](#)). City and county leaders should also offer job training for housing demolition and remediation. This “emergency labor force” training would provide skills for more permanent jobs, and empower communities to protect themselves during and after extreme weather events.

Build Equitable and Sustainable Communities

2. City and county leaders should adopt anti-gentrification policies, for example by: supporting equitable economic growth; improving access to jobs by expanding public transit; requiring that all new development include affordable housing units for current community residents; donating government property to communities and helping to create community land trusts to allow

community property ownership for affordable housing and local businesses; supporting local business development; and designing and implementing policies to end illegal evictions.

Improve Transportation and Mobility

3. City, county and transit leaders should make existing transit services more reliable, safe, functional, timely, and environmentally-friendly. City leaders should invest in needed bus repairs and upgrades (through maintenance budgets if possible); plant trees and take other steps to shade all sidewalks, and bus and metro mover stops to reduce heat exposure; and provide seating at all stops, which is essential for elderly and disabled riders.

Expand Access to Clean Energy:

4. City and county leaders should expand investments in weatherization and energy efficiency improvements in low-income areas by providing incentives and subsidies (e.g., for insulation and HVAC efficiency measures) to reduce energy costs, especially during summer months when people must run air conditioning and face higher energy bills.
5. City and county leaders, working in partnership with community leaders, NGOs, and citizen's groups, should provide green jobs training (e.g., for solar panel installations and energy efficiency improvements) and help with job placement.

In addition to the summit workgroup recommendations, participants identified other recommendations for RCAP 2.0 during the full group discussions, including the following:

Make Equity a Core Principal and Frame for RCAP 2.0

6. RCAP 2.0 authors should continue to develop RCAP 2.0 recommendations that reduce climate change vulnerabilities exacerbated by historic inequities and injustice, and address socioeconomic challenges to build resilience in low-income communities and communities of color.
7. RCAP 2.0 authors should make climate equity a central principal and goal for RCAP 2.0, and ensure that underserved communities have a seat at the table as RCAP 2.0 is developed and implemented. If equity is put in a box on the side it will not be adequately addressed.
8. City and county leaders should make equity an integral part of all policy-making. Equity recommendations cannot be added at the last minute, after the real work has already been done.
9. City and county leaders should require equity and social and racial justice training for all government staff. Ensure that equity and justice goals and principals are mainstreamed across staff work plans, and not relegated to a single staffer in each department. To develop effective climate mitigation and resilience solutions, city and county staff must understand the historic context of racial and social injustice and how it exacerbates climate vulnerability.
10. Community groups should work with city and county leaders to develop curricula for social and racial justice training and self-exploration. Community groups should also work with city and county leaders to develop trainings on why climate change is the threat multiplier in low-income areas and how to design and implement equitable climate solutions.

Effectively engage low-income communities and communities of color

11. City and county leaders should hold town hall meetings to ask what neighborhoods need, to support public education, and to allow communities to advocate their priorities.

12. City and county leaders should work with community groups to effectively engage low-income communities and communities of color by designing meetings so that people can actually attend, for example by providing food, childcare, and transportation support; by convening meetings in vulnerable neighborhoods; and by providing Spanish and Haitian Creole translation.
13. City and county leaders should work with community groups to appoint a climate equity officer for every community.
14. City and county leaders should work with community groups to educate community members on climate risks and RCAP 2.0, and share near- and long-term climate risks to get peoples' attention.

Reduce heat risks in low-income communities and communities of color

15. City and county leaders should work with community groups to conduct a street-by-street inventory of working air conditioning units to identify how many households lack efficient and functional units, and launch a program to provide units to those who need them the most. Officials should assess the availability of and access to county-wide cooling centers, including capacity for overnight stays.

Protect water resources and improve water infrastructure

16. City and county leaders should update water infrastructure by improving drains and pumps, and by learning to live with water by redesigning around low-lying areas, streets and parks.
17. City and county leaders should protect coastal infrastructure at risk of flooding and sea-level rise.
18. City and county leaders should update ancient watering systems to better care for trees and plants.

Secure city and county leadership and commitments to implement RCAP 2.0

20. City and county leaders should commit to implementing RCAP 2.0 recommendations. Mayors have only taken modest steps to implement the RCAP, and only a handful of commissioners advocate its implementation and funding. The Miami mayor just acknowledge this year that the RCAP exists.
21. Community advocates should work with city and county leaders to create political will for climate action by organizing petition drives and mobilizing networks to support community resilience improvements and make resilience a priority.
22. Community groups should work with city and county leaders to build an engaged and vocal public to help identify priorities and effective climate change solutions. (For example, advocates were persuasive when they came to a budget meeting wearing life jackets with a specific climate ask.)

Secure funds to build equitable and resilient communities

23. City and county leaders and community groups should support the ballot initiative to create general obligation bonds to expand resources for climate resilience and needed infrastructure upgrades.
24. City and county leaders should secure funds in the budget cycle to support equity and justice training for government staff. Advocates can help by demanding this funding at budget meetings.

Address climate displacement and gentrification

25. City and county leaders should work with community groups to have an honest conversation, including with developers, about gentrification, and the impacts of new development in low-income communities and communities of color to identify effective strategies to prevent displacement.
26. City and county leaders should work with community groups to fund and commission a credible third-party study to assess the risk and extent of climate gentrification, and possible solutions.

Appendix A: Recommendations from the Breakout Group Sessions



Emergency Preparedness (left) and Sustainable Communities (right) breakout groups

After the breakout group recommendations were written on white boards and projected on screens, summit participants voted for their three top priorities using red dot stickers. Priorities selected by participants are listed below, with the number of votes/dots for each noted.

1. Emergency Preparedness Priorities

City and county leaders should:

- Create a “Climate Corps” to provide extreme weather safety and emergency training, which will also create job opportunities (i.e., an “emergency labor force”). (12 dots)
- Use Houston cooling centers as a model to reduce extreme heat risks to communities. (2 dots)
- Build water features in public spaces (e.g., splash parks to reduce heat-related health risks). (2 dots)
- Reduce heat-related health risks to elderly people, including by developing a city registry/call list for vulnerable residents. (2 dots)

2. Sustainable Communities

RCAP authors should:

- Make equity and justice principals and goals the heart of RCAP 2.0. (3 dots)

City and county leaders should:

- City and county leaders should adopt anti-gentrification policies, for example by supporting equitable economic growth; improving access to jobs by expanding public transit; requiring a portion of all new development include affordable housing units for current community residents; donating government property to communities and help create community land trusts to allow community property ownership for affordable housing and local businesses; supporting local business development; and passing policies to end illegal eviction. (9 dots)
- Provide incentives for home and building energy efficiency improvements, especially during summer months when people must run air conditioning and face high energy bills. (5 dots)

- Support the creation of neighborhood advisory boards to build community power and support decision-making by community leaders. (3 dots)
- Raise awareness and provide incentives to landlords to improve building efficiency, and install solar power and new and efficient AC units. (2 dots)
- Support workshops and training to educate community members on climate change risks, build capacity for communities to develop and implement resilience solutions. (2 dots)
- Support local food production (e.g., raised community gardens protected from flooding). (2 dots)
- Install green roofs with food gardens. (2 dots)
- Expand financing for home weatherization. (1 dot)

3. Transportation and Mobility

South Florida Commuter Services and city and county leaders, in partnership with community groups and foundations should:

- Plant trees and take other steps to shade all sidewalks and bus and metro mover stops. (9 dots)
- Make existing transit services more reliable, safe, functional, timely, and environmentally-friendly. For example, city leaders should invest in needed bus repairs and upgrades. (5 dots)
- Deploy bus rapid transit. (2 dots)
- Make ride-sharing more accessible via a smart phone app and other creative solutions for low-income community members who do not own smart phones. (2 dots)
- Make sidewalks and crosswalks more safe and pedestrian-friendly. (2 dots)
- Link county and city transit card systems, and create a centralized app, website, and other sources of information. (1 dot)
- Encourage the U.S. Department of Transportation to allow transportation services to allocate funds for active transit projects like walking, biking, metro mover, and buses – not just highways. (2 dots)
- Allow small-business vendors and farmers markets to open next to transit services to improve access to fresh and healthy foods. (1 dot)

4. Clean Energy Priorities

City and county leaders, working with community groups, should:

- Expand investments in home weatherization with government subsidies in low-income areas (e.g., for insulation or HVAC efficiency measures). (7 dots)
- Develop a concrete target for reaching 100% renewable energy by XX date with XX% done by the end of the RCAP 2.0 timeline. (2 dots)
- Fund solar energy installations to reduce the need for fossil fuels and improve air quality. (1 dot)
- Provide green jobs training and job placement assistance. (5 dots)

Community Leaders, NGOs, and Citizen Groups should:

- Empower voters to demand that funds be allocated across city and county budgets for clean energy development. (1 dot)

Appendix B: Summit Presentation Highlights



Zelalem Adefris and Caroline Lewis present; Mayor Cindy Lerner engages in the discussion; Nichole Hefty discusses the status of the RCAP renewal.

Caroline Lewis, Director of the CLEO Institute

Caroline asked the audience, “where would you spend your billion to reduce climate risks?” and sparked the following answers from participants:

- Food and water vulnerability
- Public health
- Social equity
- Biodiversity protection
- Displacement of people/gentrification

We need creative solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change. For example, putting solar panels on top of shade roofs in every parking lot.

In Miami-Dade County, both low- and high-ground communities in historically overlook and low-income areas are vulnerable to climate change. The CLEO institute is working with both vulnerable low-lying communities—including Shorecrest, little Haiti, Sweet Water—and vulnerable high-ground communities—including Liberty City.

Heat intensity is a serious risk in low-income areas, as many residents live without air conditioning. When engaging community members to discuss climate change risks, you need to meet people where they are. When CLEO first started its community outreach efforts, people didn’t show up. CLEO kept coming back to their neighborhoods until they did.

In little Haiti, CLEO offered three-way translation in Haitian Creole, Spanish and English to encourage participation and effectively communicate with the diverse population. In Shorecrest, CLEO meetings brought to light the city’s lack of response to flooding problems.

Priorities and areas of concern for frontline communities in Miami-Dade County including: emergency preparedness, climate gentrification, tidal flooding, climate change education and engagement, and

reducing health risks. To develop effective resilience solutions, RCAP 2.0 must view and address each of these issues through an equity lens.

Dwight Bullard, former Florida State Senator, Political Director, Florida New Majority Education Fund

To understand the problems and develop solutions, you have to pay close attention to socioeconomic issues, and Miami-Dade County has a lot of them. Challenges today must be put in historical context. For example, Dwight, who is 40 years old, was the first person in his family to attend a school that was not segregated. Dwight's grandmother was among the last generation to experience slavery.

A common misconception by well-meaning folks is that people can simply pull themselves up by their bootstraps. We must fight this misconception. The concept of voting rights illustrates this well. The 15th Amendment gave black men the right vote in 1870 but it took another 100 years for the government to actually create the protections to ensure this right, and in 2016 these protections were rolled back. Was it happenstance that people weren't able to secure their voting rights, or were there larger societal forces at play that denied this right?

How is climate justice any different? We are talking about communities that by law have been marginalized. Redlining is a governmental process—only certain people can be insured and have access to other services. Even today, why are one group's insurance rates much higher than another's?

We need to be honest with ourselves and check our own privileges, including the ability to be mobile, to have a good education, and access to banking and homeownership. We can't look for solutions from the same government institutions that created many of today's problems in the first place.

As we develop solutions, we need to check who is in the room, and identify who is missing and why. When deciding whether to attend a climate change workshop or town hall meeting, many people are asking themselves, "do I go to the meeting, or feed my kids?"

We must have courage to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. We can do that in our country. In some other countries, people do not have this right.

As we start the march inland in response to sea level rise, developers need to be honest in their deliberations. For example, developers say they want to make the community better. This is also what they said when they built the interstate highways through the heart of communities decades ago.

With Citizen United in place, how do we make a difference? The constitution is a living document that gives individuals rights. We can use it to strengthen our democracy. Seattle provides democracy vouchers to residents, which allow everyone to spend \$20 to support the candidate of their choice. Politicians come to every community meeting to secure people's support and \$20 vouchers from as many residents as possible. As a result, politicians are accountable to residents and have passed a \$15 minimal wage and other progressive policies.

Nichole Hefty, Deputy Resilience Officer, County of Miami-Dade, South East Florida Regional Climate Change Compact representative

The county can't build resilience to climate change alone. It needs to work closely with communities and mayors. The RCAP pulls the region together by pooling resources to create a framework, priorities and recommendations for climate change action. The RCAP allows counties to implement the recommendations depending on their resources.

The RCAP is a living document. During the ongoing update, authors are identifying the things the original version missed, including public health, social services and equity, economic resilience.

With the update, mitigation is still a priority but adaptation has become a much bigger focus than previously. RCAP 2.0 has a policy workgroup to help shape the updated recommendations. The RCAP 2.0 framework includes the following: policy and operational guidance; consistent goals and measures; multidisciplinary outreach and education; priority investments; better regional coordination and alignment.

The RCAP authors will continue to take public comment through August, and will update the recommendations through the fall. The final RCAP 2.0 will be released during the week of December 14-15, 2017 at the 9th Annual SE Florida Summit.

Q&A

Will equity and justice be an overarching principal and goal of RCAP? RCAP 2.0 authors are still figuring out how to make equity and justice an overarching principal and goal. RCAP 2.0 will have a chapter on equity, and equity will be woven in throughout the document.

Zelalem Adefris, Climate Resilience Program Manager, Catalyst Miami

All systems of the body and health will be affected by climate change. Climate change is causing an increase in high-heat and heat danger days (when the heat index is above 105 degrees).

There are big disparities in climate change vulnerability between high- and low-income communities. For example, Coral Gables (high income) is likely to fare better in higher heat because it has more trees than Liberty City (low income), which has no trees. Youth, elderly and construction and agricultural workers are the more effected by high heat.

A hotter and wetter climate will also bring more mosquitos. This year has already seen the first case of locally transmitted Zika. Climate change also increases the risks of respiratory diseases. Data on asthma rates by zip codes reveal that Liberty City has among the highest rates.

Climate change also exacerbates mental health challenges, including PTSD, depression, and even pre-traumatic stress disorder. A new condition called "Solastagia" is emerging, whereby people experience homesickness when they are still at home because they are sad about impending changes.

Traffic and access to reliable public transportation are big challenges in South Florida. Buses break down constantly. These same buses form the backbone of emergency evacuations, which expected to increase with climate change.

Susy Torriente, Chief Resiliency Officer and Assistant City Manager, City of Miami Beach

In 2010, the four counties came together in a non-partisan way to expand and leverage expert capacity across fields and counties to address climate change. The four county climate compact quickly became a national and international model for regional collaboration on climate change resilience planning.

The RCAP offers an important set of recommendations for municipalities to consider and implement. Counties are able to make much more progress on climate resilience and mitigation if they collaborate with and support cities. Fort Lauderdale was able to accomplish a lot to strengthen climate resilience by working in partnership with Broward County.

The authors of RCAP 2.0 are rearranging chapters and areas of focus to streamline the document and make it more useable. The RCAP 2.0 authors are adding chapters on equity and health, and are working to be more inclusive in designing the recommendations, and to craft policy ideas that are effective, equitable and practical for the region.