Anacostia Park and Community Collaborative

Next Steps: Climate Change and People

On February 3, community-based organizations from Wards 7 and 8 joined those from other wards, citywide organizations, and representatives from DC government agencies to talk #ClimateReadyDC and people, the ways that climate change is negatively affecting residents who live east of the Anacostia River.

Kate Johnson of the District Department of Environment and Energy (DOEE) provided an overview 2016 Climate Ready DC Plan (PDF), including DOEE predictions that extreme heat waves and flooding will become more common. They will have the greatest impact on older, sick, and poor residents. Kate also identified available District agency resources and programs supporting resiliency.

The more than 40 attendees discussed how nonprofits which are typically not engaged in environmental issues should get involved for the benefit of their clients, and what human services-focused nonprofits need to know about climate change impacts. The group responded to four questions to help DOEE and interested organizations implement the Climate Ready DC Plan and Wards 7 and 8 residents become more resilient and to mitigate climate change:
1. If our goal is to engage organizations serving the most vulnerable community members, how should we talk about climate readiness?

2. Who else needs to be at this table?

3. What can individual organizations provide so we have a complete network of supports for vulnerable residents?

4. What are your suggested next steps coming out of this meeting?

Q1: If our goal is to engage organizations serving the most vulnerable community members, how should we talk about climate readiness?

- **Messages**
  - Message must get buy-in from organizations and residents
  - Current messages are too high level and too long-term.
  - Break down into smaller messages, more near-term impacts, and smaller actions that residents or organizations could take to address these risks. Currently, this is a "tsunami of information."
  - We need to make messages more personal, relatable, deliver message in a way that resonates with people and in the context of people's lives (for example, in context of social ills). They need to be directed to the community so that it stands out among all other messages. We should morph our negative messages into something that resonates with people
  - DC government is good at technical analysis and solutions but it needs to address psychological responses — fear, anxiety — to climate change impacts

- **Methods**
  - We need to first understand what the community values, their realities; we're talking about communicating with people who live in communities with a disproportionate risk for climate change impacts
  - Develop messages from the bottom up, start in the community from the beginning
  - Partnerships can help with message development
  - Make more presentations, more one-on-one meetings
Q2: Who else needs to be at this table?

- Community
  - People in the community and we need to go into the community to reach them
  - We should pay people/give them stipends
  - Do with nonprofits what we are talking about with people — find the nexus between climate change and climate readiness and what issues they are concerned about/their mission

- Organization types and specific organizations
  - Various types — youth groups (faith institutions, schools, scouts); health and health-related organizations/efforts (Unity, Vulnerable Communities Health Care Coalition, etc.); psychologists and social workers; returning citizens organizations (Mayor's Office on Returning Citizen Affairs, nonprofits, Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA, federal)); local "heroes"
  - DC government agencies: MPD, Department of Behavioral Health, Mayor's office, Safer Stronger (out of office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services), Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Sustainable DC partnerships and ambassadors
  - Identify trusted groups to bridge issue with community — DC Office on Aging (DCOA), Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative (FSFSC), East River Family Strengthening Collaborative (ERFSC), National Association of Social Workers (NASW), DC Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCOP), Legal Counsel for the Elderly (DC AARP), faith community, ANCs, Earth Conservation Corps (ECC), Greek organizations

Q3: What can individual organizations provide so we have a complete network of supports for vulnerable residents?

- Connection to community leaders, formal and informal
- Outreach capacity/ambassadors. Some agencies and organizations already have ambassadors that could be trusted communicators to help get message out (DCOA Ambassadors, Sustainable DC Ambassadors, ECC Ambassadors)
- Education capacity
- Organizing capacity
- Networks, contacts
- Ideas/feedback on how to message and engage vulnerable residents
Q4: What are your suggested next steps coming out of this meeting?

1. Post materials and notes from 2/3 meeting online to available to participants and other interested organizations and residents (APACC)
2. Follow-up meeting(s) with groups identified in previous questions — either have another meeting or go to other organizations’ meetings (DOEE, others)
3. Use focus groups to create simpler, more understandable, more near-term and more actionable messages (DOEE, others)
4. Create mechanisms to share information in schools and among other organizations described above (DOEE, others)

Stay connected to next steps by subscribing to the APACC Blog: Wards 7 & 8 News, Action, Images, following APACC on Twitter, @anacostiarivpk, and signing up for Anacostia Urban Waters Partnership updates (email Katherine Antos, kantos@anacostiatrust.org).