



**EL PUENTE**

**Climate Change in Our Community:**

What We Can Do to Protect Our Families and Our Communities



# Contents

**Introduction**

**1**

**Understanding the consequences**

**2-5**

**Coping with climate change**

**6-9**

**Moving forward**

**10**

**References**

**11**



## El Puente

El Puente is a community human rights institution located in New York City, New York (NYC) that promotes leadership for peace and justice through the engagement of its youth and adult members in the arts, education, scientific research, wellness and environmental action. Founded in 1982 by Luis Garden Acosta, El Puente currently integrates the diverse activities and community campaign of its Green Light District within its seven neighborhood Leadership Centers, and its nationally recognized public high school, the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice. Organizing in North Brooklyn and beyond, El Puente remains at the forefront of community/youth learning and development issues and as such, initiates and impacts social policy both locally and nationally.

The El Puente Green Light District (GLD) is a strategic 10-year initiative to sustain, grow green and celebrate Williamsburg's Southside community. The GLD seeks to build equity and sustainability by connecting residents to each other, socially and culturally; sharing knowledge and resources across the neighborhood through partnerships, coalitions and alliances; improving access to public resources; and building leadership in the community to carry their collective goals forward.

## Acknowledgements

This booklet on the local impacts of climate change and related solutions was developed for El Puente through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) program. The contents do not necessarily reflect the policies, actions or positions of EPA.



# Introduction

## Welcome!

*Climate Change in Our Community* provides an introduction to climate change in the Williamsburg and Bushwick neighborhoods of Brooklyn, New York (NYC) as shown on the map below. You will learn what climate change means for you and what actions can be taken by you, your community and your government to improve community health, the economy and our shared quality of life in a changing climate.

## What is climate change?

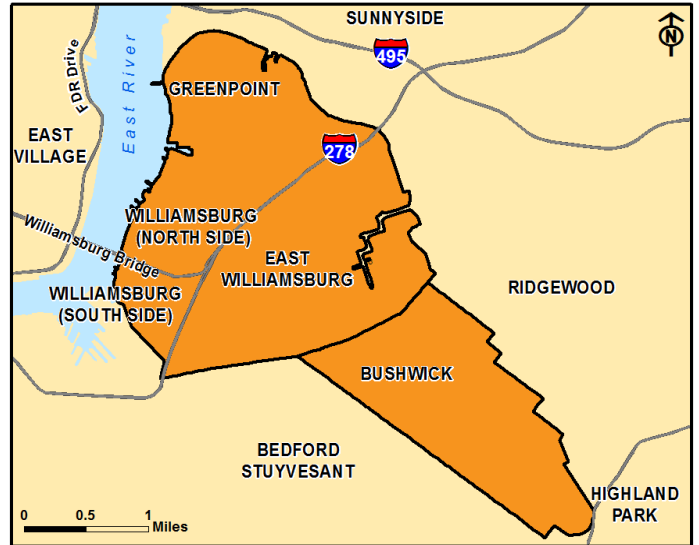
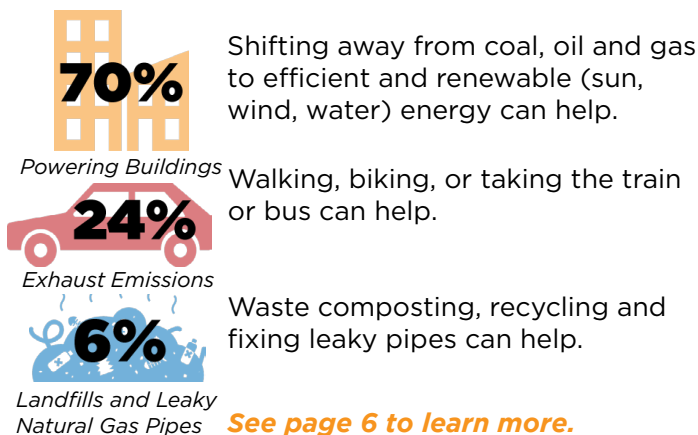
You wake up in the morning, look out your window and see it's raining. You know you'll need an umbrella today. That's weather. You are planning a vacation next spring and look at the average temperature. This average is determined from many decades of measurements. That's climate. **Climate change is the long-term average of daily weather conditions, such as rainfall, temperature, wind and snow. When these long-term averages change substantially, that's climate change.**

## We all contribute to climate change

Human activities are now adding greenhouse gases to the air 200 times faster than in the past 300 years. Greenhouse gases, mostly methane and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), trap heat on the earth like a blanket. They warm the earth, and also change when and where we see rain, snow and wind. These changes can contribute to the climate risks described throughout this guide.

Many things people do can create greenhouse gases. We add methane to the air when we put trash in landfills, raise cows or remove natural gas and coal from the ground. We add CO<sub>2</sub> to the air when we drive, use electricity from power plants, produce goods in factories and cut down and burn forests. Since the industrial revolution began in the mid-1700s, we have added 40 percent more CO<sub>2</sub> and 150 percent more methane to our air.

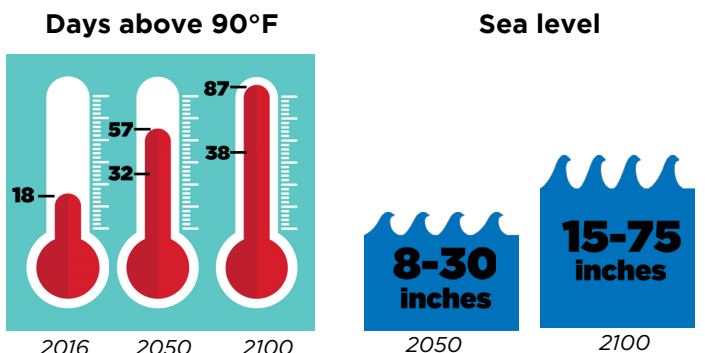
Because greenhouse gases are generated by human activity, there are things we can do to help solve the problem. In NYC, greenhouse gases come from the following sources:<sup>1</sup>



*El Puente serves the Williamsburg and Bushwick neighborhoods of New York City. El Puente's Green Light District is located in Williamsburg's Southside community.*

## Climate change is happening now and will very likely get worse<sup>2</sup>

If you think you are using your air conditioner more than you used to, you're probably right. Average temperatures in NYC have risen by 4 degrees since 1900 and could rise by 3-6 degrees by 2050. As a result, warming seas and melting glaciers have increased sea levels in NYC by just over a foot in the past century. These changes could happen faster when we add greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. The larger increases below happen when we add more greenhouse gases to the air. The smaller increases happen when we produce fewer greenhouse gases.



*Hot summer days could increase air pollution and affect your health.*

*Sea level rise and flooding could flood 350,000 Brooklyn residents and businesses.*



# Understanding the consequences

## What kind of flooding could sea level rise cause near us?<sup>3</sup>

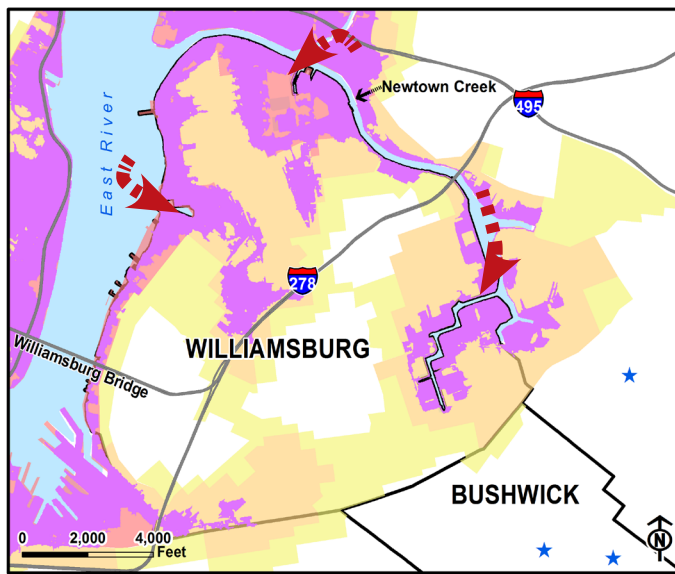
On page 1 you heard that sea levels may rise by as much as 30 inches or 2.5 feet by 2050 and as much as 75 inches, more than 6 feet by 2100. That's more than 80 years from now! Will sea level rise even affect you?

According to Climate Central's Surging Seas, created with input from independent university scientists, Brooklyn is highly vulnerable to sea level rise. If sea levels rise as predicted, by the year 2100:

- Of the 350,000 potentially affected residents and businesses, 61,000 highly vulnerable Brooklyn residents could be exposed to flooding, including children, the elderly and those with medical issues or fewer resources to cope with disasters.
- 50,332 homes could be affected, and \$11.5 billion in property could be damaged or lost.
- 41 schools, 25 churches and three hospitals could be flooded or damaged including the ODA Primary Health Center and a number of Hasidic Jewish schools in South Williamsburg.
- 210 hazardous waste sites could be flooded, including the ExxonMobil Greenpoint remediation site in North Williamsburg, shown in the photo to the right.

## Storms could place more people at risk<sup>4</sup>

Storms like Superstorm Sandy are expected to be more intense and perhaps more common with climate change. When sea levels rise and storms occur, the surge of water amplifies sea level rise. Storms create storm surge when wind pushes more water onto the land, increasing extent of flooding in communities. The map below compares flooding from storms with sea level rise.



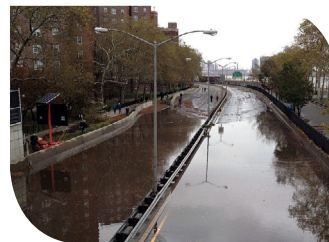
Zone A (Flooding from any hurricane)      2050 Sea Level Rise (Mid-range)  
Zone B (Flooding from > Category 2 hurricane)      ★ Evacuation Centers  
Zone C (Flooding from Category 3/4 hurricane)

Sea level rise and flooding from the East River and Newtown Creek box Williamsburg in on three sides. Red arrows show the movement of water from the rivers during flooding. Because of this, people in Williamsburg need to leave their neighborhood to access evacuation centers. Use photos to visualize sea level rise where you live at [coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/canvis](http://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/canvis).

## Disaster preparedness and recovery are all about people<sup>5</sup>

Responding to extreme events and flooding will require you to be prepared. Sea level rise and stronger storms could mean your home will flood, even if it has not before. If you need help in a disaster, NYC has programs that can help: the Community Emergency Response Teams ([www.nyc.gov/CERT](http://www.nyc.gov/CERT)), NYC Citizen Corps ([www.nyc.gov/citizencorps](http://www.nyc.gov/citizencorps)) and the Ready New York Campaign ([www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/ready-new-york.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/ready/ready-new-york.page)). These groups helped communities plan what they would do before, during and after Superstorm Sandy.

Knowing your neighbors can help a community recover from disasters. After Sandy, more people turned to family, friends and neighbors than to the government for help. Community hubs served as known gathering spaces. Community members know where high needs areas are and who needs to be checked on, who depends on medicines and who does not speak English.



Flooding in NYC during Sandy reduced or eliminated access to almost all modes of transportation. Flooding on FDR drive (top left); along a bay bikeway (top right); and the Cranberry Street tunnel (bottom left).

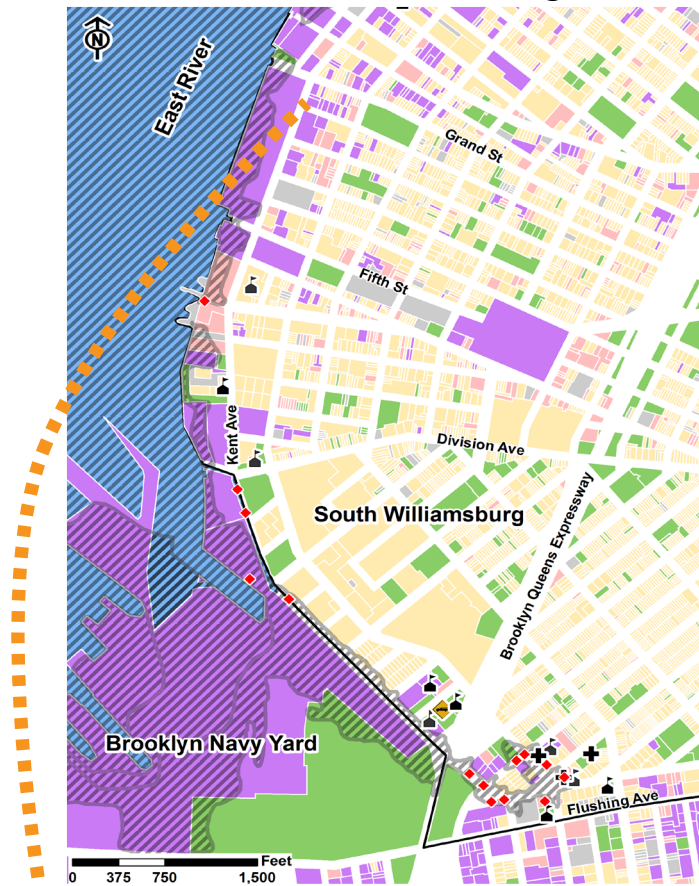


# What might this flooding look like?

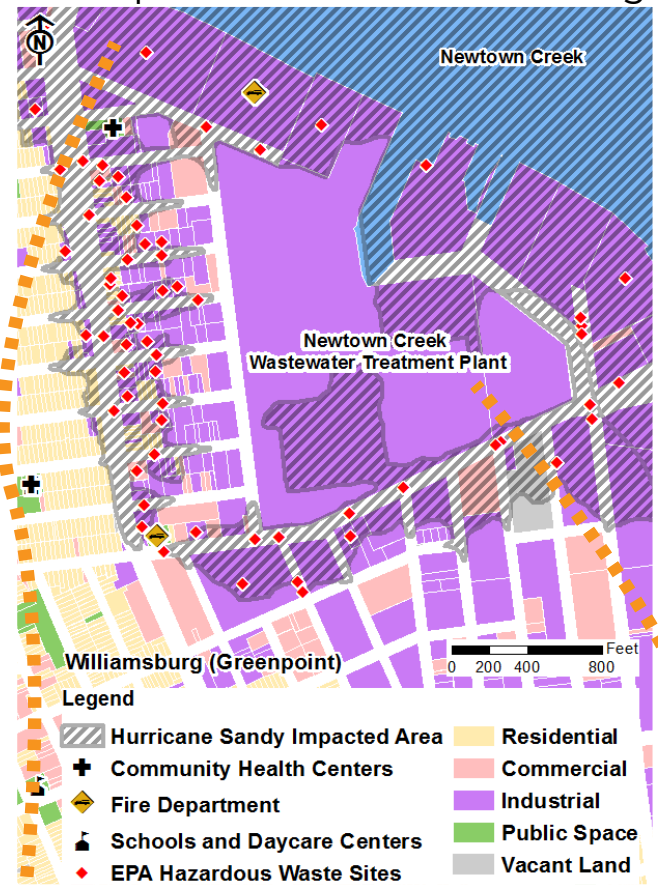
The diagonal lines on the maps below show storm surge and flooding from Superstorm Sandy. **If sea level rises as expected, areas flooded during Superstorm Sandy will likely be flooded on a regular basis by 2100.** Much of South Williamsburg is protected, but the shoreline and southern portion are at risk. Greenpoint could experience substantial flooding of contaminated sites and the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. This could expose residents to sewage and pollution in their neighborhoods.

Clusters of dense industrial sites combine in New York’s Significant Maritime and Industrial Areas at Newtown Creek and Brooklyn Navy Yard. The clustering potentially exposes neighbors to higher levels of air pollution and water pollution during flooding. Both areas are also in storm surge zones as shown in the maps below. NYC’s Waterfront Revitalization Program ([www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/applicants/wrp/wrp.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/applicants/wrp/wrp.page)) and NYC Environmental Justice Alliance’s Waterfront Justice Project are working to reduce social disparities and climate risks in these areas.

South Williamsburg



Greenpoint in North Williamsburg



**Williamsburg (Greenpoint)**

**Legend**

	Hurricane Sandy Impacted Area		Residential
	Community Health Centers		Commercial
	Fire Department		Industrial
	Schools and Daycare Centers		Public Space
	EPA Hazardous Waste Sites		Vacant Land



Radiac Research Corporation stores and transports used hazardous waste and low-level radioactive waste from other locations for short term storage prior to shipment to authorized recycling, treatment and disposal facilities. **The corporation is adjacent to homes and to Public School 84.**



**Flooding of industrial and polluted sites can carry pollutants into nearby neighborhoods.** Purple areas of the map show industrial sites such as scrap, manufacturing and oil refineries. The red diamonds are contaminated or polluted sites. An example is the ExxonMobil Greenpoint remediation project shown above.



The Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant could flood during storms and due to rising sea levels. **Flooding at the plant could expose people to raw sewage and wastewater.**

# Understanding the consequences

## How could climate change affect my health?

Walk outside on a hot and humid day. The air seems thick, making it hard to breathe. In the distance, dark storm clouds are approaching, bringing heavy rainfall, flooded streets and power losses. Climate change could make all of this worse. Loss of power can leave people without heat, cooling and water, leading to health risks such as heat stroke, spoiled food and carbon monoxide poisoning from generators.

In the future, rising temperatures could bring more extreme heat and humidity, especially in cities like NYC. This heat keeps air pollution from cars, trucks and buses at ground level – a big problem for those with asthma and other respiratory conditions. Even more troubling, when floodwaters recede, mold and mildew can grow in wet basements and attics of flooded homes and apartments, which can cause respiratory problems, heart conditions and death when people are exposed to them. Rising temperatures can send people with diabetes and heart disease to the hospital as well.

### Air pollution and asthma<sup>6</sup>

**Climate change drives up asthma rates** by increasing ground-level ozone on hot, humid days and increasing mold and mildew after storms. That's part of why reducing greenhouse gas emissions is so important to our health. Soot and particulate matter, similar to dust from buildings, traffic and power plants, also make asthma worse, by entering and irritating your lungs. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions can also reduce particulate matter, a win-win for everyone breathing these pollutants.

Signs you may have asthma:

- ✓ Wheezing/whistling when you breathe
- ✓ Frequent cough
- ✓ Shortness of breath
- ✓ Chest tightness

### Do you live in Williamsburg or Bushwick?



Compared with the rest of NYC, your neighborhoods have 40 percent more adults with asthma and 74 percent more children in the Emergency Room (ER) for asthma than the rest of Brooklyn. Your neighborhoods have the highest rates of ER visits and hospitalizations for asthma. Rates for African Americans and Latinos are higher still.

### Want to check your air quality today?



See how temperatures are affecting your air today by visiting [aqicn.org/city/usa/newyork](http://aqicn.org/city/usa/newyork).

### Hotter summers and your health<sup>7</sup>

Walk across a blacktop basketball court during the heat of July, then across a grassy lawn. How do they compare? Go home and sit inside at night, hoping to find relief from the heat, only to find it's just as hot as the day was. Cities with dark asphalt, streets and roofs store the sun's heat, raising indoor and outdoor temperatures. In NYC, this "heat island" drives temperatures up by 8-14 degrees compared with more rural areas in New York state.

**Extreme heat was the leading weather-related cause of death in NYC in 2012. Between 2000 and 2012, there were 162 heat-related deaths and 447 ER visits. Williamsburg and Bushwick are some of the most vulnerable communities in NYC, with high death rates for seniors during hot days and few seniors who have access to indoor air conditioning.**

Do you have the symptoms below? If so you may be at higher risk from diabetes and heart disease due to rising summer heat.

- ✓ Very thirsty
- ✓ Frequent urination
- ✓ Blurred vision
- ✓ Tingling in hands or feet
- ✓ Slow healing
- ✓ Dizziness

Summer heat can send people to the ER. People with diabetes, heart disease or obesity may be especially at risk.

## How could climate change affect my wallet?<sup>8</sup>

If you're like most people in America, you spend much of your income on your food and your home. On average, Americans spend as much as 12 percent of our budget on food and about 7 percent on heat and electricity. However, those with fewer resources spend as much as **20 percent** of their income to keep the power and heat on in their homes and as much as **37 percent** on food. Climate change could increase this burden, making it harder to pay your food and energy bills.

### Severe weather is raising the price of food<sup>9</sup>

We can't assume access to healthy food is a given, especially because most of our food comes from over 1,000 miles away - take a look at the label next time you shop. When we depend on food from faraway we may be paying more for it. The fuel used to transport the food also adds greenhouse gases to the air. Storms and droughts can also hit global producers hard. This will affect your grocery bills.

Already one in six New Yorkers do not have access to enough food or healthy food due to unemployment or poverty. California's drought raised food prices by about 5 percent each year from 2010 to 2014. A decrease in food supply from extreme weather can raise prices. Floods in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean destroyed \$59 billion in crops, and drought in Africa destroyed \$14 billion in crops over a decade.

### A grocery list for 2100, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change



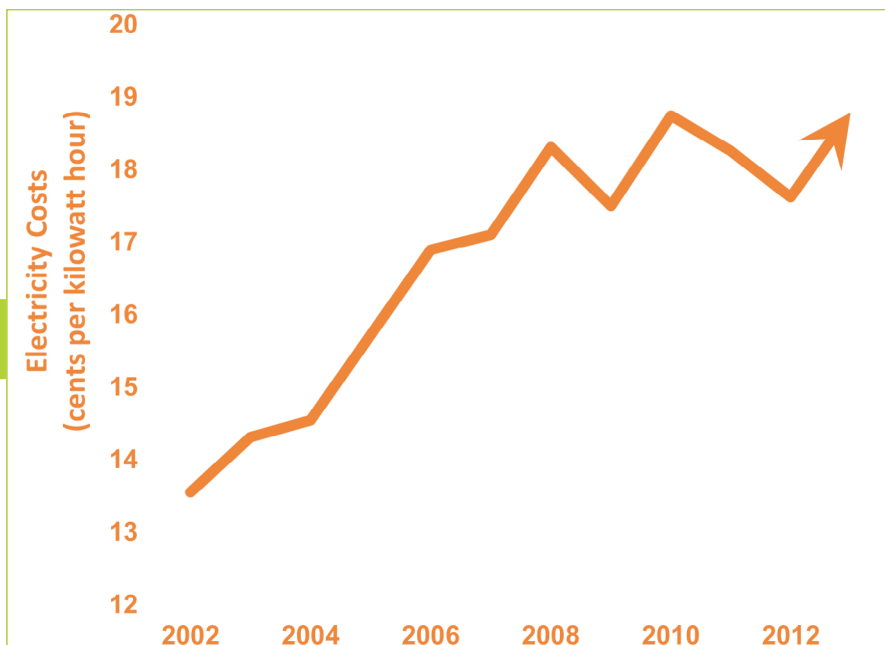
You wake up in the morning to the smell of your favorite coffee. Coffee prices doubled during the 2014 drought and could rise more in the future due to climate change. Supplies are expected to decline by 14 to 54 percent by 2100.



Your bread and cereal could be 30 to 50 percent more expensive just from climate change.



Your trip to the butcher could cost you 20 to 30 percent more.



### Energy costs are on the rise<sup>10</sup>

Rising energy costs can also impact your household budget. **While New Yorkers have the second highest energy efficiency rates in the nation, we also have the second highest energy bills.** The graphic to the left shows this high energy cost as a 41 percent rise in electricity prices since 2002. Climate change impacts, such as rising temperatures and storm damage to electric lines, will likely raise these rates further.

**“For the sake of our children and our future, we must do more to combat climate change.”**

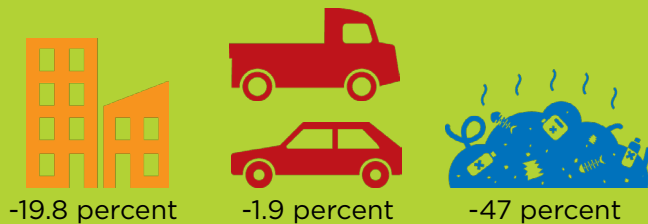
**-President Barack Obama, 2013 State of the Union**



# Coping with climate change

## What changes and improvements are happening near me?

NYC is a leader in greenhouse gas reductions because of the efforts of New York residents and workers to use public transit, reduce energy use and make less trash. Between 2005 and 2013, greenhouse gas emissions declined in each of the following areas:<sup>11</sup>



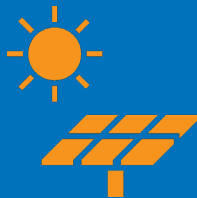
These actions have reduced greenhouse gases by 11 million metric tons of carbon dioxide since 2005. This is like taking 2.3 million cars off the road (green cars).



NYC plans to take an equivalent of 10 million cars off the road by 2050 (total green and red cars), an 80 percent reduction from 2005 greenhouse gas levels, using the actions below.

## Climate actions to protect you and your family in NYC

According to OneNYC, the City's sustainability plan, and the State of New York, the actions below are being taken to help you prepare for a prosperous and healthy future in the face of climate change.



**Powering  
490,000 homes**

Solar installations increased 300 percent from 2011 to 2014. NY state plans to increase solar from 519 megawatts to 3,000 megawatts by 2023.



**30,000 new  
cyclists**

Cycling has increased by 337 percent since 2000.



**#1 in big city  
air  
quality**

NYC rose from #7 best to #4 best air quality in a large city since 2008. Plans are to become #1 by 2030 by reducing particulate matter by 20 percent and sulfur dioxide by 50 percent.



**Cleaner diesel  
in  
your community**

NYC will reduce diesel pollution by retrofitting 90 percent of its diesel vehicles.



**35 fewer days in  
ER for Asthma**

NYC will reduce the number of child asthma doctor visits by 25 percent by 2035 by improving indoor and outdoor air pollution.

## State and federal programs will help us get to a clean energy future faster

The following state and federal programs set standards and provide resources that will help reduce climate change:

- *State of New York:* The State of New York is taking action to give New Yorkers access to a clean energy future by creating a \$5 billion Clean Energy Fund. This fund will support clean and renewable energy and empower you to control your own emissions by switching to clean energy rather than relying on your power company.
- *EPA's Clean Power Plan:* This plan requires all states to reduce pollution from power plants by 32 percent by 2030. According to EPA, the Plan will prevent 3,600 premature deaths, 1,700 heart attacks, 90,000 asthma attacks and 300,000 missed work and school days each year.
- *NYC Solar One ([www.solar1.org](http://www.solar1.org)):* Solar One is New York City's Green Energy Education Center working with residents to install community-based solar (for example, Solarize Brooklyn), provide green job training, support energy efficiency and engage youth in renewable energy design.

## What can I do to help?

Just thinking about climate change can be overwhelming. Where to start? Can you afford solar panels? An electric car? Organic food? Maybe not. However, there are many simple, affordable ways that you can do your part! As a New Yorker, the actions below could have the largest impact on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### Watch what you eat<sup>12</sup>

What you eat and where it comes from affect greenhouse gas emissions. Growing your own food or buying it from nearby farms means less fuel is needed to transport the food. This creates fewer greenhouse gas emissions. Eating beef two or less times a week can reduce your diet's impact on climate change. Producing 1 calorie of beef releases the same amount of greenhouse gases as producing 9.5 calories of beans and grains.



### Make your home more energy efficient<sup>13</sup>

Does your thermostat say it's 70 degrees, but your home feels like 50 degrees? Making your home more efficient can take care of this problem. In New York state, more than half of home energy use comes from space heating; a quarter from appliances, electronics and lighting; and almost a fifth from water heating. Think of energy efficiency as a savings account. Switching from heating oil to renewable energy or natural gas can save your lungs and your dollars. Living in NYC, you can reduce your average utility bill by 20-30 percent with energy upgrades, giving you back enough for a meal out or movie date each month.



You can use ConEd's Home Energy calculator ([http://www.coned.com/customercentral/calculators/EC\\_res\\_HomeEnergy\\_Calculator.html](http://www.coned.com/customercentral/calculators/EC_res_HomeEnergy_Calculator.html)) to see where your energy dollars are going. For example, someone living in a two-bedroom apartment built before 1960, common in NYC, could save money by taking the actions in the table below.

**“I believe global warming and climate change are real threats to our planet.”**

**-NY Governor Andrew Cuomo (as NY Attorney General)**

### Go for a walk

Walking to your local park or community garden can improve your health. Exercise is a proven strategy to reduce obesity and stress and help with diabetes and heart conditions, while reducing greenhouse gases.



### Don't throw it all away<sup>14</sup>

On average, each New Yorker recycles only about 4 pounds of the more than 20 pounds of trash they produce a week. This means most of NYC's trash goes to landfills instead of being reused or recycled.



**Recycle.** NYC plans to prevent waste from being sent to landfills by 2030 with single stream recycling, zero waste schools and incentives to put your waste in the recycling and compost bins. Learn about how to recycle your waste at [www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/zerowaste/residents](http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/zerowaste/residents).

**Compost your food at a community garden.** By gardening and composting, you can keep as much as **31 percent of your trash** out of landfills and save money on groceries. Growing your own food reduces waste from food packaging, and composting reduces the amount of food waste that goes into landfills. NYC's Compost Project ([www.nyc.gov/compostproject](http://www.nyc.gov/compostproject)) offers training to create your own backyard compost and garden and also runs compost drop-off sites at the Williamsburg Greenmarket.

### Actions you can take in your home to reduce your energy bill and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

	Annual Cost Savings (dollars)	Annual Carbon Savings (pounds)
Professional weatherization	\$352	442
Lower winter thermostat from 70 to 65 degrees	\$220	283
Switch to LED lighting	\$178	571
<b>Total Savings</b>	<b>\$750</b>	<b>1,296</b>

# Coping with climate change

## What can my community do?

Now you know what you can do in your home or shopping trip to help prepare for climate change. What can you do to prepare your community for climate change? Do you pick your elderly neighbor's mail up for her? Do you meet friends at the farmer's market or volunteer at the local soup kitchen? Getting to know your neighbors is one of the best ways for you to prepare for the impacts of climate change. Your community can be a great resource for clean energy resources, evacuation plans and sharing ideas. El Puente's programs reach into the community and bring people together to think about climate change, sustainability and social justice through innovative art and education initiatives.

### Prepare for the next storm

You can help your community prepare for the next big storm. The first step is to create an environment around you that will reduce flooding by advocating for more open space, rain gardens, vegetated channel (bioswales) and retention ponds to create spaces for rainwater to go during and after a storm. The next step is to make sure you are prepared to protect yourself and your neighbors from the storm by creating and testing plans for evacuation, cooling center locations and access to food and water. You can also improve access to food during and after the storm by creating community gardens. The last step is to make sure you can get in touch with neighbors who are elderly or unable to leave their home by setting up a communications system (for example, text alerts, phone tree, door-to-door visits).



*Emergency kits can help you survive in your home when disaster leaves you without electricity or access to grocery stores. Go kits can be made if you need to evacuate. Both are easily stored in closets. A list of supplies for each can be found at [www.nyreadinesschallenge.org/](http://www.nyreadinesschallenge.org/).*

### Participate in El Puente's energy efficiency programs

El Puente can help your community navigate NYC's energy efficiency programs, assess where buildings are wasting money, and improve access to clean and efficient energy.

### Seek out clean and efficient community power systems

Renewable energy systems, such as solar panels with backup batteries can keep the heat and lights on in emergencies, reduce energy bills and reduce pollution. To access solar power for your rental building, participate in NY-Sun's shared renewables and "Solarize your Community" ([ny-sun.ny.gov/Get-Solar/Community-Solar](http://ny-sun.ny.gov/Get-Solar/Community-Solar)).

### Green Jobs - Green New York<sup>5</sup>

You and your neighbors would love to upgrade your building's energy system, but it is a rental building. You and your neighbors pay your energy bills in your building, so energy upgrades won't save your building owner anything. In older buildings, code violations may be found during upgrades. This is why 60 percent of owners opt out of upgrades in NYC. Below are some programs communities can access to help with these costs:

- Find free energy audits and efficiency upgrades with EmPower New York ([www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/EmPower-New-York](http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/EmPower-New-York)) and Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program ([www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Home-Performance-With-ENERGY-STAR](http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Home-Performance-With-ENERGY-STAR)).
- EPA's energy efficiency strategies for affordable housing ([www3.epa.gov/statelocalclimate/documents/pdf/affordable\\_housing.pdf](http://www3.epa.gov/statelocalclimate/documents/pdf/affordable_housing.pdf)).
- Mothers Out Front ([www.mothersoutfront.org](http://www.mothersoutfront.org)) can assist you with switching to a more energy efficient lifestyle.





## What can cities do?

You just learned what you can do about climate change. But did you know you can have a larger impact? The actions you take to reduce climate change can inspire others to take action. Peer pressure is also a huge driver of behavior change, so talking about your actions can help. Cities can take what works in small areas and apply it across the city, so your small change may inspire millions of New Yorkers. Some great ways for NYC to do this include supporting neighborhoods in their climate actions, supporting affordable clean energy and making sure everyone has access to green space.

### Build up and support neighborhoods

Empowering communities to control their future may be the best way to prepare for climate change. Cities can do this by providing resources for communities to develop resource centers that focus on emergency response, local food, clean energy, health and jobs.

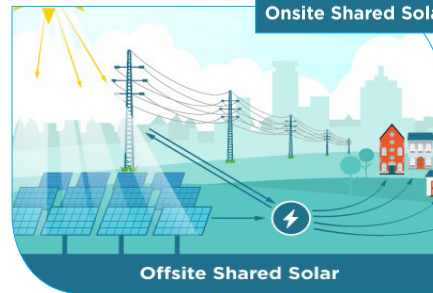
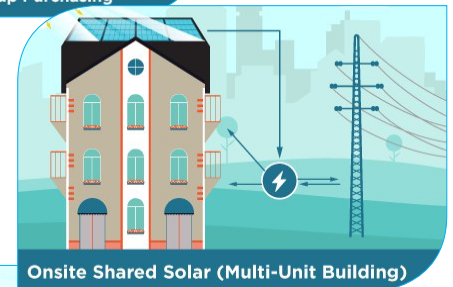
### Support clean and affordable energy for all<sup>16</sup>

**Multi-family buildings account for 58 percent of NYC's greenhouse gases.** However, tenants may not have permission from property owners or financial resources to reduce home energy use or have access to renewables. In the U.S., 50 percent of consumers and businesses are unable to install solar panels for these reasons.

Cities can help change this. New York is part of the National Community Solar Partnership, a \$520 million effort to support 300 megawatts of new solar power for low-income communities. The images to the right illustrate what community solar looks like.

### Support green spaces for all<sup>17</sup>

Remember those urban heat islands? Pavement covers 72 percent of NYC's land area, increasing flooding and pollutants in urban heat and runoff. Parks and trees can keep you cool, clean your air and reduce your energy bill. Green spaces provide habitat for wildlife such as birds, and improve air and water quality while saving residents money.



The figures above show different ways of sharing solar power with your community. For more info and which type might be best for your community, visit: [energy.gov/eere/sunshot/community-and-shared-solar](https://energy.gov/eere/sunshot/community-and-shared-solar).



Replacing black asphalt roofs with green roofs reduces peak temperature by up to 60 degrees and reduces winter heat loss by 34 percent, saving residents money.



NYC street trees save \$27.8 million in energy costs and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> by 113,000 tons a year.



Parks and gardens increase nearby property values by 8-30 percent.

# Moving forward

## What actions could we all take today?

We can all come together now to make a difference! NYC has taken on the challenge to drastically reduce the potential impacts of climate change on communities by implementing policies and programs that reduce waste and greenhouse gases and protect vulnerable areas of the city. El Puente is also taking action through initiatives such as the Green Light District. Here are seven steps you can take today to make a difference, too!

- ✔ **Your climate impact.** Humans are causing climate change by adding greenhouse gases to the air. NYC is taking bold actions to reduce greenhouse gases 80 percent by 2050, supporting solar energy and reducing diesel pollution to improve air quality. You can support these efforts by participating in City programs. Page 6.
- ✔ **Your safety.** Williamsburg is surrounded on three sides by water making it especially vulnerable to sea level rise and flooding during more intense storms, which could impact your community more frequently. Preparing yourself and neighbors for disasters now is important for your safety. Pages 2 and 8.
- ✔ **Your health.** Rising summer heat and related declines in air quality could affect people with asthma, diabetes or heart disease most. Adopting a healthy diet, walking more and spending time in parks could help you better prepare for climate change. Page 4.
- ✔ **Your food.** Intense storms, droughts and rising heat will raise the price of food. Adopting a healthy diet and supporting community gardens and local farms could improve your health and save money.
- ✔ **Your trash.** New Yorkers send 80 percent of their waste to landfills, but 31 percent could be composted. Recycling your trash and composting at community gardens in your neighborhoods could improve your health and save money.
- ✔ **Your utility bill.** Electricity prices have risen 41 percent since 2001 in NYC. You can reduce your utility bill by 20-30 percent with free energy audits and by buying solar power from your community.
- ✔ **Your family.** Spend time outside with your family and community, know your neighbors and share stories about healthy communities and climate change solutions.

**“[Climate change] presents one of the principal challenges facing humanity today.”**

**– Pope Francis (2015)**

### Taking Climate Change Solutions to the Caribbean

El Puente launched the Latino Climate Action Network in 2013 in Puerto Rico, recognizing that many people in NYC have their roots in Latin American and Caribbean countries. A coalition of community members and groups inspire climate policies that will prepare for and reduce the impacts of climate change through “La Caminata por un Puerto Rico Unido Ante el Cambio Climático.” The goals include a transition to renewable energy, LED highway lighting, funding for coastal management programs and a Caribbean-based land use plan for climate change. This annual event provides communities with an opportunity to understand local climate change issues and potential solutions to address them.

### Who else can I contact now?

Reach out to El Puente staff:

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(718) 387-0404

NYC Water and Energy Retrofit Accelerator  
[RetrofitAccelerator@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:RetrofitAccelerator@cityhall.nyc.gov)

NYC Compost Project  
[www.nyc.gov/compostproject](http://www.nyc.gov/compostproject)

NY-Sun for community solar  
<http://ny-sun.ny.gov/Get-Solar/Community-Solar>

NYC Solar One  
[www.solar1.org](http://www.solar1.org)

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# Climate Change in Our Community

What We Can Do to Protect Our  
Families and Our Communities



Produced in cooperation  
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