

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN FOR CLIMATE ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

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Credit: Craig Roberts





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# BACKGROUND

The City of Bethlehem will evaluate policies, develop strategy recommendations, and gather public feedback on issues related to climate change and sustainability to develop a Climate Action Plan (CAP). CAPs attempt to address climate change by promoting resilience through both mitigation and adaptation strategies. The purpose of climate mitigation initiatives is to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through methods such as increased energy efficiency and use of renewable energy. The purpose of climate adaptation initiatives is to prepare for the impacts of climate change, such as increases in temperature and precipitation, through methods that reduce the harm of these impacts, such as stormwater runoff improvements for flood prevention.

Bethlehem City Council unanimously passed a Resolution endorsing the creation of a Climate Action Plan in February 2017. Mayor Robert J. Donchez's administration, through the Public Works department, issued a request for proposals (RFP) for climate action plan preparation in June 2019. Bethlehem-based engineering firm WSP and science-based community center Nurture Nature Center (NNC), located in Easton, were selected as consultants to develop the CAP in 2020 with input from Bethlehem's public and stakeholders, including the Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) and Councilman J. William Reynolds, who played critical roles in developing the CAP initiative.

# INTRODUCTION

A collaborative planning approach is needed to realize climate action plan objectives. This Stakeholder Engagement Plan will describe Bethlehem's approach to communicating details of the CAP development process and the CAP itself. It will also describe strategies for soliciting input and incorporating feedback into the CAP's content. Stakeholders include the general public as well as representatives from community organizations and institutions that will serve in a CAP working group (CAP WG). The engagement plan details facilitated and informational sessions, surveys, and communication strategies. WSP is lead on the CAP project and will coordinate logistics with City staff (the City) and the CAP WG. The CAP WG consists of representatives from organizations selected to ensure participation and feedback from Bethlehem's diverse general public as well as large GHG-emitting institutions and other stakeholders anticipated to be critical to implementing recommended actions in the CAP. NNC will lead the public and CAP WG engagement activities, plan and attend all engagement meetings, and facilitate discussions. Both consultant organizations will advise the City on strategies related to communicating progress and gathering public input.

For each stakeholder engagement activity, WSP and NNC will outline the meeting and educational materials required for successful participation. Both community and CAP WG stakeholders have meaningful input to contribute to the CAP development process. We will utilize the collective expertise of the stakeholder engagement team to listen to community needs, inform community understanding of the benefits of prospective GHG reduction initiatives, and inspire stakeholders to contribute to the CAP development process. Our team will leverage existing projects and ties to the community to expand the reach of public engagement. This approach to inclusive stakeholder engagement will foster an environment of trust and collaboration to achieve CAP objectives.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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## WSP

WSP will lead the CAP project and provide world-class subject matter climate and engineering expertise. For stakeholder engagement, WSP will participate in all meetings, primarily as a subject matter expert but also in other ways as defined in engagement strategies developed by NNC. WSP will coordinate logistics, including scheduling and venues, with the City and CAP WG. WSP will work with NNC to advise the City on strategies related to communicating progress with the project process and gathering public input. WSP will also review engagement strategies and other materials developed by NNC to provide feedback and support.

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## NURTURE NATURE CENTER (NNC)

NNC will lead the stakeholder engagement process for the development of Bethlehem’s CAP. NNC brings more than a decade of experience developing Lehigh Valley-focused education initiatives and social science research studies about hazards and risk communication. NNC will lead development of engagement strategies and necessary presentation materials, plan and attend all engagement sessions, facilitate discussions, and record notes. NNC will work with WSP to provide summary reports from each meeting to inform the larger CAP report and advise the City on strategies related to communicating progress and gathering public input.

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## CLIMATE ACTION PLAN WORKING GROUP (CAP WG)

WSP and NNC will work with the City to develop a list of stakeholders for inclusion in the CAP WG. The CAP WG will consist of representatives from organizations, institutions and individuals that represent the diversity of Bethlehem’s community and that are anticipated to be critical to implementing the CAP. Engagement of this group of stakeholders will occur in advance of and parallel to public community meetings. The CAP WG will be expected to review the CAP; provide feedback on strategies and policies to achieve targets; help identify barriers and solutions for implementation of strategies; and assist in gathering resources for implementation and sustaining effort. CAP WG group members will also be expected to reach out to and encourage their contacts to participate in public meetings.

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## CITY STAFF (THE CITY)

The CAP project is sponsored by Bethlehem’s Department of Public Works with support from Mayor Robert J. Donchez and City Council. Staff from Public Works will be the primary City stakeholders participating in public engagement, although others may be involved as needed. To demonstrate the City’s ownership of the project and its investment in the outcomes, and to encourage public participation and ensure the success of the project, City representatives will introduce the goals of the project and the roles of WSP and NNC to kick-off all public meetings, as well as the initial CAP WG meeting. The City will also provide representatives to participate in the CAP WG who will advise on the development of the CAP, outreach objectives and forum and survey questions.

The City will assist with logistics of planning public meetings and promote the meetings via social media, email and other communication venues. WSP/NNC will plan each meeting, survey, and engagement and will run the sessions, including facilitation and note-taking. They will provide summary reports from each meeting to inform the larger CAP report.

### CAP WORKING GROUP MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Alliance for Sustainable Communities – Lehigh Valley
- ArtsQuest
- Bethlehem Area School District
- Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce
- Bethlehem City Council
- Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)
- Bethlehem Parking Authority
- Buy Fresh Buy Local (Lehigh Valley)
- Citizens’ Climate Lobby (Lehigh Valley chapter)
- City of Bethlehem, City Clerk
- City of Bethlehem, Emergency Management
- City of Bethlehem, Planning & Zoning
- City of Bethlehem, Public Works
- Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley
- Greater LV Chamber of Commerce, Diversity Council
- LANTA
- Lehigh University
- Liberty High School Environmental Club
- Lehigh Valley Green Building United
- Lehigh Valley Industrial Park
- LVHN
- Make the Road – Pennsylvania
- Moravian College
- New Bethany Ministries
- PPL
- UGI
- Sierra Club
- Sustainable Energy Fund
- Watershed Coalition of the Lehigh Valley
- Wind Creek Bethlehem

# OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Engaging public audiences and key stakeholder groups in the climate action planning process can result in improved outcomes in several ways. Successful engagement contributes to increased stakeholder trust in City leadership and increased sense of City efficacy, which results in:

- Better range of proposed solutions contributed by knowledgeable participants
- Increased buy-in from stakeholders to take actions within their organizations
- Public commitment to the goals of the CAP
- Public cooperation with municipal strategies and approaches identified in the CAP

The objectives of this stakeholder engagement process are twofold: (1) to provide opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the CAP development process, which will provide broad benefits by increasing public education and support for the plan, and (2) to enhance the development of the CAP itself to incorporate the details and considerations from a diverse and representative group of Bethlehem stakeholders.

### 1. Opportunities for stakeholders:

- Learn about climate change and what the City of Bethlehem has previously done to address mitigation and adaptation;
- Provide input on long-term community-level planning related to the CAP;
- Connect to the process of decision-making related to emission-reduction targets and mitigation strategies to achieve targets;
- Provide input on which strategies to include and prioritize within the CAP.

### 2. Enhancements to the CAP:

- Understand each stakeholder group’s and community sector’s needs and priorities;
- Identify sites most at risk from the impacts of climate change;
- Identify private sector risks that are tied to municipal infrastructure (e.g., roads, bridges, tunnels, electric transmission and distribution);
- Identify vulnerable communities;
- Balance long-term forecasts with actionable information;
- Leverage resources and data, such as value at risk, geographic distribution of employees, and third-party data on risks such as flooding and severe weather.

## KEY MILESTONES AND ANTICIPATED TIMELINE

Date	Milestone	Objectives
April 2020	First CAP WG meeting	Outline plan and expectations; information gathering through surveys and discussion.
May 2020	First public meeting (informational)	Announce the process; highlight prior and existing City actions on climate; solicit input on other local action; and administer a survey to gather input and understand the public’s priorities.
July 2020	Second CAP WG meeting (working session)	Help inform and develop components of the CAP.
September 2020	Second public meeting	Discuss goals and future vision for climate action in Bethlehem, with a focus on discussing specific strategies for inclusion in the plan.
November 2020	Third public meeting	Present the draft CAP to the public and solicit feedback.
Jan.- Mar. 2021	CAP announcement	Public release of final CAP and kick off ongoing discussions to facilitate implementation.

# PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

Stakeholder participation in the Bethlehem CAP process will be guided by principles of **equity, inclusion and appreciative inquiry**. Equity and inclusion require that all sectors of the community, regardless of background, resources, access and previous political participation, will have opportunities for engagement and input into the process. This plan will include multiple strategies for input, including allowing for online or written feedback as well as in-person meeting participation. Meetings will be held in accessible locations at times that accommodate a variety of working schedules. Further, to include Spanish-speaking populations, meeting announcements and minutes will be produced in English and Spanish and written and online feedback in both languages will be accepted.

Using Nurture Nature Center's approach to facilitating equitable dialogue between residents and policy-makers (using a model known as From Risk to Resiliency), this planning process **will prioritize discussion and the collection of many diverse ideas over a need for consensus**. The Risk to Resiliency dialogue model was built with appreciative inquiry at its core. Appreciative inquiry calls upon participants to reflect on the strengths and assets available within the community to shape and reach shared goals. As a planning tool, appreciative inquiry practices can help stakeholders identify common goals and strategies for reaching those goals.

Additionally, this approach highlights the value of residents' and stakeholders' role in the CAP process and clearly articulates how the input will inform decision-makers/decision-making process.

The strategy underlying the engagement plan will reflect a triple bottom line approach to climate mitigation that supports the health and well-being of all residents, responsible stewardship of the natural and built environment, and long-term economic growth. All outreach and engagement will be informed by a public health and equity perspective, which serves as an organizing and unifying concept that resonates positively with most stakeholders, particularly underserved communities that historically have been left out of critical government decision-making processes and the community based organizations that represent their interests. Also, the core of our approach looks at GHG mitigation as an integrated system, rather than through more traditional divisions between, for example, energy, natural resources, public health, land use, transportation, and water. This approach provides a forum for agencies that otherwise might not coordinate to tackle problems that are bigger than their individual missions, collectively reinforcing CAP objectives.

## FROM RISK TO RESILIENCY

### Highlights from Nurture Nature Center's model for community dialogue:

- Urgent local environmental risk motivates science learning
- Recruit attendees using personal community connections and intensive neighborhood-based outreach
- Motivate people to participate by sharing their feedback with decision makers
- Design programs to reflect community expressed perspectives and needs for practical information
- Gather knowledge and experience (stories) of community before meetings; use this knowledge to develop meeting programming
- Talk to decision makers before meetings. Base questions, in part, on what information they need or want to know
- Use exhibits and art to help draw nonscientists into conversation and science learning, particularly if exhibit reflects their experience
- Hold events in community meeting places to help engage people and value their sense of community
- Draw on expertise of scientists who participate as one of many expert voices in conversations about science and factors that mitigate risks



# PLAN DETAILS

## ACTIVITIES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

**Main activities will include:**

- **General communication of CAP process and results** – through email, listservs, stakeholder contacts and networks, social media, flyers and notices. Expected outcomes include an informed public, increased support for the CAP and process, and positive community perceptions of City efforts.
- **CAP webpage** – the City will create a specific page on its website dedicated to the Climate Action Plan development. This page will serve as a hub of the latest information about the project, such as objectives and upcoming meetings. It will also include a submission form, which will serve as an always-open portal for submitting comments, ideas and strategies to the CAP development team.
- **Public informational sessions** – in-person meetings open to the general public to communicate about the CAP development process and the importance of the CAP. Expected outcomes include an informed public, identification of broader community priorities, increased support for the CAP and process, and contacts for public input into the CAP.
- **Public facilitated sessions** – in-person meetings open to the general public to allow for input into the CAP and feedback on proposed strategies. Expected outcomes include needed information to enhance success of CAP strategies, public buy-in to the CAP, and positive perceptions of the process and plan.
- **CAP WG sessions** – in-person and virtual communications with select committee of representative stakeholders. Expected outcomes include review, suggestions, and feedback to guide the CAP process and development.
- **Surveys** – offered online to allow for broad engagement and input from stakeholders to gather needed information to inform CAP development. This is needed due to the limited time frame available for engagement and the likelihood of not being able to address all necessary topics/issues during in-person meetings.



*From Risk to Resiliency session at Nurture Nature Center*

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## HOW WILL INPUT INFORM DECISION-MAKING

Input gathered through the engagement process will be directly considered in the development, revision, and finalization of the CAP. The City will be provided with summaries of all input after stakeholder meetings and surveys are completed. In addition, the meeting minutes will be archived on the CAP website as a resource for decision-makers as they consider various strategies and plans for climate action. Targeted questions to solicit the most direct and useful feedback to the plan will be carefully constructed and presented, including on the potential mitigation strategies and which should be a priority. Providing multiple venues and times in the process of plan development ensures that input is considered throughout the process and that there is a diversity of opportunities to contribute.

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## ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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### *CAP WG ENGAGEMENT*

- **Representation** – from City government, transportation authorities, utilities, universities, regional planners, corporate and industrial stakeholders, Bethlehem Area School District, sustainability-focused non-profit organizations, community-focused non-profit organizations, and citizen groups.
- **Expectations** – review CAP; provide feedback on strategies and policies to achieve targets; help identify barriers and solutions for implementation of strategies; help identify resources for implementation and sustaining effort. Stakeholder group members will be expected to reach out to and encourage their contacts to attend public meetings.
  - **CAP WG Meeting 1** – will focus on understanding stakeholders’ previous and current efforts to reduce emissions and take climate action, and advise on CAP goals, objectives, and public engagement. Brainstorming about best ways to engage a diverse public for input will also be discussed.
    - The meeting will start with an introduction from the City, WSP and NNC, followed by brief introductions of all working group members.
    - WSP will present the CAP process and work to date and NNC will discuss the opportunities for input and advisement from the WG.
    - Discussion around past and current emission reduction and climate actions will occur, followed by broader CAP goals discussion.
    - Brainstorming about public engagement will conclude the meeting.
    - Participants will be encouraged to fill out an online survey with more details if they have not done so prior to the meeting.
    - Detailed notes from the meeting and survey analysis will inform a summary to help guide the CAP process and communication.
  - **CAP WG Meeting 2** – will focus on reviewing CAP mitigation strategies, consider barriers, needs, and resources for implementation, and advise on prioritization of strategies.
    - WSP will present the CAP progress and mitigation strategies.
    - NNC will lead a targeted discussion, walking through each mitigation strategy, gathering responses with questions related to barriers, opportunities, benefits, needs, and resources. Responses will be solicited through discussion and through a polling platform.
    - Prioritization of mitigation strategies will conclude the meeting.
    - Detailed notes from the meeting and polls will inform a summary report for consideration in revising and improving the final CAP.



- **Tools** – In -person facilitated discussions; online survey instruments – Google Forms and Slido<sup>1</sup> – a Q&A and polling platform.
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## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

- **Target outreach** – through public meetings, stakeholder group contacts and networks, city communication channels (website, message boards, flyers), neighborhood associations, parents, families, churches, and other channels. NNC will develop promotion material and ask all partners and CAP WG members to share with contacts. The City will post it on its website and social media. Flyers will be disseminated to public gathering places like stores, churches, and schools.
  - **Public Meeting 1** – will focus on providing information introducing the process and gathering input on broader goals of the community for the CAP.
    - Promotion of the meeting through social media, flyers, stakeholder group contacts, CAP website.
    - This may need to be replicated in multiple locations – for instance have one on Southside and one on Northside in order to ensure our commitment to equity.
    - When attendees arrive, they will be asked to pin their home location on a map of neighborhoods so we can gauge distribution of responses throughout the city.
    - A short 30-minute presentation about the need and CAP process will be followed by small group discussion around 2-3 key questions about broader goals and concerns.
    - Large group report out and next steps will end the meeting.
    - Highlight that these broader goals will be considered in the plan’s development with input on more specific strategies at the second public meeting later in the year.
  - **Public Meeting 2** – will focus on identifying goals and a vision for future climate action in Bethlehem (ideas compiled from social media, surveys, and other sources, with discussion and ratings of ideas in a forum)
    - This meeting will discuss specific strategies for inclusion in the CAP developed from several sources, including those developed and proposed by WSP, NNC and the CAP WG.
    - Strategies will also be gathered from the public via social media and physically through bilingual response boards at the SS branch library and/or Hispanic Center to make sure we are providing access to underrepresented audiences.
    - Promotion of the meeting will occur through social media, flyers, stakeholder group contacts, and CAP website.
    - When attendees arrive, they will be asked to pin their home location on a map of neighborhoods so we can gauge distribution of responses throughout the city.
    - Similar in structure to meeting 1, this meeting will begin with a short presentation on climate action strategies proposed by the CAP development team and other strategy ideas compiled from social media, followed by small group discussion around these strategies and a large group report out at the end.
    - Highlight that their input on these strategies will help inform what strategies are prioritized in the CAP and a third public meeting will allow them to weigh in on the draft.
  - **Public Meeting 3** – will present the draft CAP with focus on soliciting feedback (forum with different tables for the different sections of the CAP), discussing ways to continue involvement after the CAP process ends, and defining next steps and roles and responsibilities to remind stakeholders that it’s not just the City that has to carry out the plan – it’s community wide.
    - Similar process to previous meetings with promotion and map pin board and similar structure to the previous meetings with a brief presentation of the CAP sections and then small group discussions of specific sections with a large group report out at the end.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sli.do/>

- Highlight that the input gathered on these strategies will help develop the final CAP to be released early the following year and provide means for continued engagement (i.e. keep checking our website for progress details and how you can be involved.)
  - **Tools** – Meetings will be structured as a forum modeled after NNC’s Risk to Resiliency discussion model.
    - Model involves a short presentation followed by small group discussion and large group report out
    - Questions will be developed in consultation with the City and stakeholder group to ensure needed information is being effectively gathered.
    - Within the forum model we will quantify results from notes and surveys so that we can report in the CAP summary results of the public meeting. For example, “77% of attendees prioritized this action step”.
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## APPROACH TO ENSURING BROAD PARTICIPATION

Outreach will ensure broad, equitable participation through targeted outreach - making sure all demographics are invited to participate through specific outreach to underrepresented populations and through using different mechanisms for collecting input (social media, bilingual boards, online surveys, in-person meetings). We will also employ a diversity of communication approaches – social media, flyers, email, and radio.

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## APPROACH TO MEASURING PERFORMANCE

After discussion with the CAP WG, WSP/NNC will develop metrics for measuring success in engagement including number of community members that attend and provide input at meetings; and diversity of geographical representation as determined through pin maps at each meeting. If it is found that certain portions of the city are underrepresented, WSP/NNC may determine an additional outreach meeting is necessary in that area in order to involve those populations and solicit their feedback. By making sure the stakeholder group is diverse and representative of most populations within the City we can mitigate risks around failing to maintain equity.

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## CONSIDERATIONS FOR COVID-19

In the event that in-person meetings will not be possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several alternatives will be considered that would be able to engage stakeholders and gather input on CAP priorities and strategies. Alternatives include:

- **Online surveys** to gather specific input from stakeholders will be necessary. While surveys were already planned for CAP WG participants, surveys for the public can also be developed. This would allow more public members to participate at their convenience while maintaining social distancing practices. Other communities have employed this approach in the development of their CAP, including:

- [Rochester Community-Wide](#)
- [City of Santa Ana](#)
- [Humboldt County](#)
- [City of Dubuque](#)

We will use these as a guide to developing an online survey for the public, if necessary.

- **Webinars** (GoToMeeting, Zoom, or similar software) can allow stakeholders to view presentations and information, and ask questions and provide input remotely. Zoom allows users to split the main meeting into up to 50 separate sub-meetings or sessions complete with audio and video. The meeting host(s) can choose to split the participants of the meeting into these separate sessions randomly or manually. This would allow WSP/NNC to still utilize the Risk to Resiliency Model and gather feedback via small group discussions and a larger report out. WSP and NNC will test different webinar and virtual meeting technologies to determine the best option for the CAP engagement process.

- **Online town hall chat web options** (such as MindMixer) can be explored for ongoing feedback to strategies, objectives, and priorities that stakeholders can participate with at their convenience. The CAP website could also serve this function, depending on its functionality.
- **A dedicated email and phone number** can collect responses from the community members who do not have the technology or internet to participate in webinars might be helpful for gathering feedback.

WSP and NNC will work closely with the City to determine the best options as the pandemic unfolds to ensure broad participation and inclusive representation in the development of the CAP.

The online webinar/discussion model will be first tested with the CAP WG. WSP and NNC will explore if participants can be broken into virtual breakout groups by sector to allow for more information to be gathered. Ideally, public meetings will still be in-person. WSP and NNC will discuss with the City and CAP WG the option of delaying public meetings to allow for in-person engagement and extend the timeline to allow for this. In the event this is not possible, the online webinar/discussion model presented above could be used with the general public if testing with the CAP WG proves successful. Multiple webinars could provide participation options at a range of times. A map of Bethlehem general neighborhoods/areas and a poll question at the beginning of the webinar could capture the information that we would gather via a pin map during an in-person meeting. If, after testing with the CAP WG, it is determined this option is not feasible with public participants, alternative models will be explored.

Unfortunately, those without internet or computer/smartphone/tablet will be limited in participating in this alternative. The webinar presentations can be recorded and made available for viewing on the CAP website or YouTube. Viewers can be directed to email, call or provide comments on the website to respond with input. We will also leverage representatives of the CAP WG in order to reach populations that may lack online access; organizations representing communities with limited access will be engaged to facilitate participation in other ways that maintain social distancing required by COVID-19.