



Allentown, PA Community Engagement Toolkit



Compiled by
LaKeisha Riley, Baylee Balogh,
and the Local Climate Action
Program Partners



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Image Credit: Thirdman

They must leave with a call to action on how change benefits them and a reflection on how lack of action affects other members of the community.

WHY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While government intervention at the local level will aid the efforts of climate mitigation and adaptation, the real work will come through community engagement and partnerships. One of the barriers to climate resilience is community participation or lack thereof, and while this may be of no fault of their own, it is crucial that opportunities to educate and engage be created if area-wide reduction is the goal. Creating successful community engagement programs require consideration of the perspectives of everyone who interacts with community; children, adult residents, and visitors. Additionally, they must be fashioned in a way that not only addresses the unique needs of the participants, but also charges them to consider the unique needs of their neighbors. Individuals must leave with a call to action on how change benefits them, as well as a reflection on how inaction affects other members of the community. The goal of this toolkit intends to offer suggestions on how to do just that.



Image Credit: Eduporium

CUSP KITS

Climate and Urban Systems Partnership kits (CUSP), which inspired this booklet, refer to resource tools to promote climate related learning for both youth and their adult counterparts. These kits include, but are not limited to, hands-on interactive games, community facilitated workshops, and partnerships with external organizations with the goal of fostering a sense of collective action, climate education, mitigation, and adaptation.

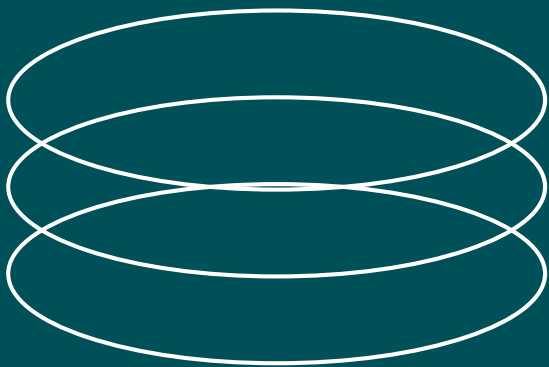
Through examinations of the available tools in and around the Allentown area, and discussions with various community partners, this toolkit provides recommendations on engagement activities that can be created and/or cultivated in order to educate the community on the issues surrounding climate change, and also to show how their individual efforts can work towards emissions drawdown.

For more information:

- <https://greenphl.com/philly/cusp-climate-urban-systems-partnership/amp/>



Youth Engagement





INTERACTIVE GAMES

Unsurprisingly, youth engagement activities that couple education with fun have a greater impact of not only being successful but also cultivating sustainable habits in youth long-term. UNICEF (n.d.) concurs that “[h]ands-on activities, creative mediums, field visits and interactive discussions are more effective and can be replicated and incorporated into such programmes for youth engagement” (p. 22).

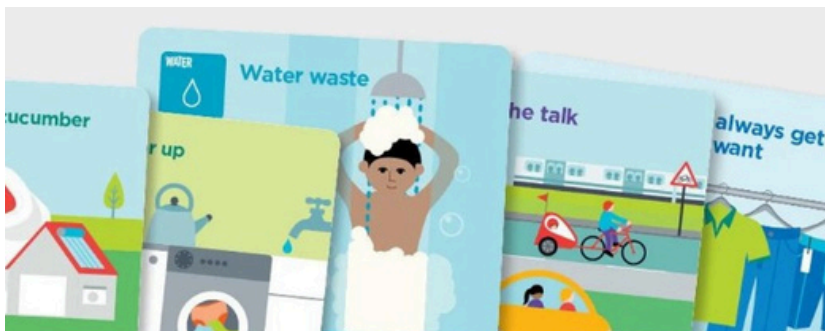


Image Credit: EcoActionGames via Etsy

These games make the complexity of climate related issues engaging which may provide the motivation for change both now and in the future.

Interactive games, such as the one picture (available through EcoActionGames), strengthen youth understanding of climate related issues through problem solving and practical application of mitigation strategies. These games make the complexity of climate related issues more engaging which may, in turn, provide the motivation for change both now and in the future.

For more information:

- <https://www.etsy.com/listing/1331344802/climate-emergency-action-card-game>



Image Credit: Golden Care Therapy

Urban sensory gardens educate children about nature and their importance in the climate equation.

URBAN SENSORY GARDENS

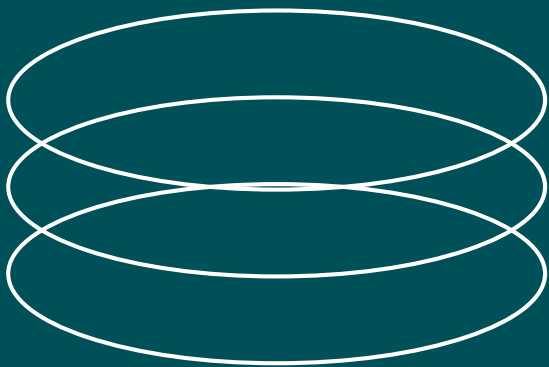
Urban sensory gardens offer children the opportunity to connect with nature by using all five senses while simultaneously growing and providing food, promoting sustainability, and creating a sense of community. As local and global temperatures change due to climate related issues, the threat to food security becomes even more prevalent particularly in underserved communities. Urban sensory gardens educate children about nature, plants, and their importance in the climate equation, by allowing them to cultivate healthy food for themselves and other community members while also working to combat food insecurity and food deserts.

For more information:

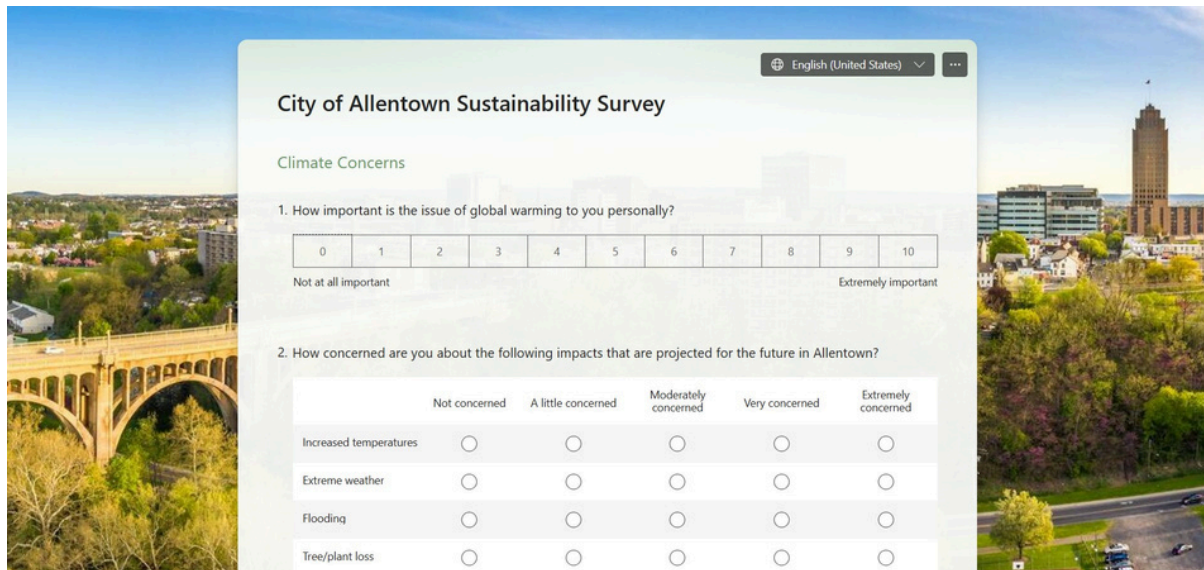
- <https://kidsgardening.org/resources/garden-activities-designing-a-sensory-garden/>
- <https://kidsgardening.org/resources/digging-deeper-urban-gardening/>



Resident Engagement



COMMUNITY SURVEYS



City of Allentown Sustainability Survey

English (United States)

Climate Concerns

1. How important is the issue of global warming to you personally?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Not at all important

Extremely important

2. How concerned are you about the following impacts that are projected for the future in Allentown?

	Not concerned	A little concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned
Increased temperatures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extreme weather	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flooding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tree/plant loss	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

One of the best ways to engage with the community, gauge their knowledge of climate related concerns, and determine the ways they prefer to engage is through the use of community surveys. The community survey shown here, created by Baylee Balogh co-author of this project, was create with the intention to distribute to select Allentown residents to determine not only how they choose to engage but also their level of understanding climate and environmental matters and their willingness to participate, adapt and learn more.



Image Credit: Pixabay

The responses to these surveys offer valuable information about the community's priorities. The information provided also offers community partners the opportunity to form value added sustainable initiatives while avoiding programs of lower importance. Additionally, at the local government level, these surveys offer insight into where to point resources that align with the community's concern (i.e. air quality, waste management, transportation, etc.).

Of all the engagement tools, community surveys may be most valuable because they are the direct voice of the most important parties in the climate discussion. Additionally, they provide data on the attitude of residents, they can be used to form external community groups for like-minded individuals which facilitate collaboration, and they be used for future environmental planning.

For more information:

- <https://climatereadycommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/S1T4-Community-Surveys.pdf>



Image Credit: Sunnyside Community Services

WORKSHOPS

Aside from engagement through the use of community surveys, encouraging residents to participate in various climate related workshops offer a dynamic opportunity to strengthen collective action measures while also providing practical ways for residents to reduce their carbon footprint. Seminars like Healthy Home Program offers ways tenants and homeowners can address hazardous home conditions by hosting education workshops that discuss topics such as weatherization, as well as tools to accomplish lead abatement, and other home threats.

Property owners may also qualify for funding through the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy, or C-PACE, program. This state financing program provides business owners funds to make energy related upgrades to new and existing properties.

For more information:

- <https://pennsylvaniacpace.org/>



Image Credit: EnviroWorkshops

Because commercial and residential energy represent two of the top emissions sectors, creating and offering programs that address the blindspot of education as it relates to how to make homes and businesses more energy efficient will be essential in drawdown efforts.

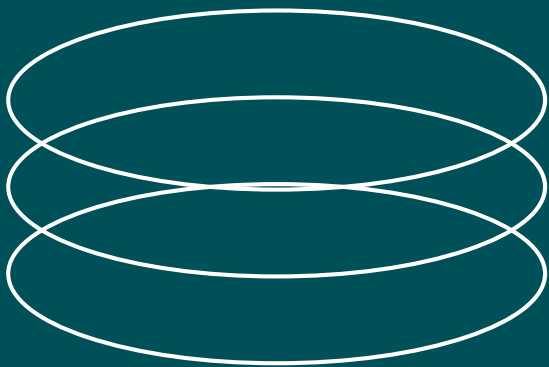
For more information:

- <https://www.enviroworkshops.com/workshops>
- <https://www.nuveen.com/greencapital/about-c-pace/what-is-c-pace>

Climate related workshops offer a dynamic opportunity to strengthen collective action measures while also providing practical ways for residents to reduce their carbon footprint.



Visitor Engagement



INFORGRAPHICS AND TOURS



For visitors, highlighting the various sustainable activities Allentown is engaging in may encourage them to make more environmentally friendly choices during their stay.

Strategically located brochures and pamphlets at rest stops and the PA Turnpike can provide visitors with suggestions for mitigation during their visit.

Furthermore, in-person tours and field trips offered through organizations such as the Da Vinci Science Center not only showcase the beauty of Allentown but also offer convincing reasons to make its preservation a priority.

For more information:

- <https://www.davincisciencecenter.org/>



Image Credit: Discovery Lehigh

These engagements make climate action practicable and benefit all stakeholders, children, residents, and visitors.

EVENT PRESENCE

With an estimated 200,000-500,000 visitors every year, The Great Allentown Fair is a great opportunity to engage with both residents and visitors. Because the fair is operated by the Lehigh County Agricultural Society, sustainability focused community organizations can set up booths with interactive “green” games while promoting engagement with their organization and community wide.

The City of Allentown also offers comprehensive events surrounding Earth Day. Vendor tables and activities promoting sustainability are always welcomed. These engagements make climate action practicable and benefit all stakeholders, children, residents, and visitors.

For more information:

- <https://www.discoverlehighvalley.com/events/major-events-festivals/great-allentown-fair/>
- https://allentownpa.myrec.com/info/activities/program_detail.aspx?ProgramID=30038



References

UNICEF. (n.d.). Engaging Youth on Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability.