

2021 PLACE Initiative Climate Summit Urban Thinker's Campus Report

May 17th - May 22nd 2021
Virtual Gathering

Lead Organizer:

PLACE Initiative

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PLACE INITIATIVE

PROACTIVE LEADERSHIP ADVOCATING FOR CLIMATE & EQUITY

Co- Lead Organizer:

Congress For New Urbanism

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Number of Participants:

62

UTC Action Day

Electric cars and solar panels won't be enough. The effort to combat Climate Change hinges upon good urbanism: the key ingredient to reduce demand for energy, and to allow us to meet our GHG emission reduction goals by 2050.

Urbanism is the force multiplier in our effort to avoid the worst impacts from climate change, and build resilient communities that will better weather the impacts of the effects to come.

Our efforts around urbanism and climate action will not be effective unless the whole community is brought along; a just transition is one that sees the co-creation of equitable outcomes.

Our UTC Action day has the intersecting themes of urbanism, climate change, and a just transition.

Background and Objectives

We are a professional network of expert planners, architects, engineers, designers, builders, developers, environmentalists, and public leaders who have worked tirelessly to improve the communities across the United States.

We can mitigate and adapt to the changing climate by rebuilding our communities around the principles of urbanism: walkable neighborhoods where most essential destinations are close enough to home that walking and bicycling become feasible, attractive alternatives to the automobile for most trips.

We drew on industry leaders to lead discussions on how urbanism can play a central role in climate response, including tools and strategies incorporating resilience & adaptation, transportation, natural & working lands, and socially equitable development.

New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals

In our UTC we shared ideas and accelerated information gathering to advocate directly for many of the SDGs and items in The New Urban Agenda. Specifically, we touched on SDGs Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

, and Goal 15 Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss

We broke our event into 4 separate group discussions that touch on these criteria: resilience & adaptation; transportation; natural & working lands; and socially equitable development. We simultaneously advocated for topics within The New Urban Agenda.

All of our discussions were focused around economic sustainability, spatial sustainability, urban design interventions, and transport and mobility for hard infrastructure. Our keynote session was on equitable development for black, indigenous, and people of color communities. Ultimately, we believe our presentations, discussions, and keynote are directly inline with the New Urban Agenda and SDGs.

Climate Action

Our UTC advocated for places that make sustainable and resilient lifestyles the norm.

Through roundtable discussions, lightning presentations, and keynotes we tackled diverse aspects of climate action. According to Peter Calthorpe in his book, *Urbanism in the Age of Climate Change*, the principles of walkable urbanism alone, where most essential destinations are close enough to home, can get us almost 70% below 1990 GHG emission levels. We further advocate for the final 30% of GHG reductions through transportation demand management strategies, such as carbon taxes and congestion pricing, as well as the adaptive reuse of existing but underutilized infrastructure, more environmentally efficient design of buildings and places, and improved education.

By advocating for walkable neighborhoods, walking and cycling become feasible alternatives to automobile dependency. This means that less infrastructure is needed, resulting in less energy in utilization and upkeep being required.

List of Speakers

Garlynn Woodsong	Founder	Woodsong Associates
Stephen Colye	Deputy Director of Community Development	City of Woodland
Mary Vogel	Principal	PlanGreen
Paddy Steinscheider	Planner	Gotham Placemaking Planning & Development
Brian Falk	Director	Center for Applied Transect Studies

Neal Payton	Principal	Torti Gallas & Partners
Chris Elisara	Producer	First + Main Films
Bruzenskey Bois	Founder	CNU Black Caucus
Camille Cortes	Designer	DPZ Partners
Rae Blackbird	Field Advisor	Our Climate
Hanadi Schmeit	Architect	Imar Trading and Contracting
Nir Buras	Principal	Urban Cloud
Sydney Chamberlin	Climate Policy Associate	The Nature Conservancy
Krupali Krusche	Associate Dean	Notre Dame
Andrew Clum	Design Consultant	Coastal Construction
Stig Terrebonne	Assistant Manager	Riley Projects
Brian Neil Byrd	Planner Coordinator	Maryland-National Capitol Park
Carla Mays	Cofounder & Head of Global Research	Smart Cohort
Laura Clemmons	Founder	Collaborative Communities
Chris Chafin	Customer Service Coordinator	University Miami
Mike Christensen	Executive Director	Utah Rail Passengers Association
Chris D'Amico	Architectural Intern	G.P Schafer Architects
Edward Erfurt	Assistant City Manager	City of Ranson
Matt Lambert	Partner	DPZ Partners
Ana Rodriguez	Marketing Communications Manager	PNHG
Cymone Davis	City Manager	Tulahassee, Oklahoma
Thaddeus Fair	Senior Associate	Living Cities
Walle Brown	Director of Planning	Equity Urban

Key Results Achieved

Our UTC had key results in 5 areas:

1. Climate justice for BIPOC communities
2. Equitable development of housing and economic opportunity
3. Natural and working lands
4. Climate resilience & adaptation
5. Transportation

Below are the specific results we found in each section of our UTC.

Equitable Development for BIPOC Communities

Equity and diversity is a huge component of our attendee's work.

We recognized that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

In this session we chose to explore and dissect components of the built environment, and how they impact our society when it comes to race.

Outcomes included:

- An identification that language is critical, that the language of urbanism needs to be translated into dialects that regular folks of different local cultures and backgrounds can relate to, understand, support, and operationalize.
- That we must address the redlining of the past by liberalizing the housing types and economic activities allowed within our towns and cities to end the use of economic segregation to achieve racial segregation by other means.
- A recognition of the importance of building partnerships with other organizations to deliver a just transition using effective urbanism as climate action.

To accomplish these goals we have discovered that while we can take a project by project approach to addressing such issues, a holistic approach is necessary to address systemic effects and impacts.

Equitable Development for Housing

Housing was a critical component of our event, and to the future of PLACE Initiative.

We advocate for systemic change to a housing system that brings the tents of homeless people to our otherwise walkable sidewalks, while leaving most of the Millennial generation priced out.

We need to make systemic change to our entire taxation system around housing at the federal level, to solve for climate justice and equitable outcomes.

Meanwhile, taxation at the local level should be a Land Value Tax system that provides protections for low-income homeowners based on purchase price plus improvements plus a small factor for inflation, not on inflated neighborhoods.

Many housing opportunities are shut down by residential incumbents in the US before they start. Fear of loss of parking and neighborhood congestion are often used as reasons--along with poor design. As urban designers, planners, builders, and community leaders, we have the skill sets to promote better, more affordable multifamily housing.

Different types of housing co-ops (<https://cccd.coop/co-op-info/co-op-types/housing-co-ops>) affordable to all income levels need to be paired with access to jobs to create economic vitality. We must move away from the drive-till-you-qualify model, towards economically integrated, diverse, mixed-income, walkable, complete communities that provide sufficient housing at income levels affordable to those who participate in each local economy.

We plan to build a coalition around housing, and advocate for policy and fiscal changes on the national and subnational level.

(<https://plangreen.net/brave-new-us-housing-policy-place-initiative-presentation/>)

Many on our team will complete a report around the future of housing in the United States by year end. Our target is to inspire the federal level to shift their thinking on housing, and provide expertise for building better, using our diverse placemaking, community making, and city building skill sets.

Natural and Working Lands

The session on Natural and Working Lands began with a meta-discussion, of why we don't use the term "countryside" instead of "natural and working lands"? The answer appears to come from the Urban to Rural Transect, which codes transect zone T-1 as "natural," and T-2 as "countryside" or "working lands." So, Natural and Working Lands refer to at least two transect zones, whereas the countryside appears to refer to only one. There is an open question as to whether Natural and Working Lands could occur in all transect zones, however, in the form of urban forests, parks, and natural areas within cities.

Indeed, the City Forest Credits program values trees based on the carbon they sequester, which is similar to the valuation of carbon through credits and offset programs that use mitigation fees from development to pay for the protection and restoration of natural and working lands.

Focusing only on the monetary and carbon sequestration values of trees, however, ignores the potential of trees to provide benefits beyond monetary value, such as the emotional healing value that planting and caring for trees provided for the community in Oklahoma City following the bombing of the federal building there.

Yet, the potential of valuation of natural and working lands is huge; credits programs could be used to raise funds to move people out of natural hazard zones, and to restore those areas in order to sequester carbon and provide other essential ecosystem services, including clean air and water, flood mitigation, and fire hazard management.

It's clear that, to create more resilient communities, settlement patterns must transition from dispersed individual homes, to communities where people are concentrated in defensible spaces, such as rural villages or hamlets, with defensible buffer zones around them, surrounded by natural and working lands where controlled burns and wildfires can occur more regularly without threatening harm to human communities; this strategy can also be effective in coastal areas, to concentrate human habitation and structures on higher ground, allowing land at lower elevations to flood naturally and act as a buffer zone to protect human communities at higher elevations.

Indeed, in order for strategies such as 30 by 30 and 50 by 50, which seek to protect and restore 30% of the land area by 2030 and 50% of the land area by 2050, to be successful, they will need to involve some form of relocation of human settlement into more concentrated patterns

that allow for land management strategies that center ecology and carbon sequestration with wildfire and flood hazard mitigation.

Resilience & Adaptation

One valuable discussion tackled Adaptation and Resilience. After debating tools the group decided that the following ideas would be the most potent solutions for creating places that thrive in the face of unknown circumstances. The solutions the group came up with were: alternative forms of housing, the need to change minds and make adaptation more appealing, updating current policy, and focusing on equity every step of the way.

Our current divided society impacted by covid has created troubled class-based forces, coupled with economic uncertainty, a sense that the government can do more at the local level, and has ultimately shown that people want immediate change. A consensus emerged that we need to build a structure to engage the community in planning at the federal level. We need to create topic-specific groups - rural, urban, suburban, etc. - to create the federal-local connections desperately needed.

As a group of community leaders, city planners, and designers, we believe that equity should be a priority every step in our process. The best urban designers are uniquely qualified as strategists adept to coach the federal government.

PLACE Initiative will be creating ties to policy makers on the federal level to provide the support for new local, community based adaptation.

Transportation

Even in this watershed pandemic moment where remote working, shopping, and socializing have burgeoned, transportation and the built environment it shapes are still at the heart of connecting communities, supporting and shaping economies, and providing access to essential services and opportunities.

PLACE Initiative's focus sits at the intersection of place, equity and climate.

Our goal of a just transition is intertwined with the evolution towards more sustainable transportation systems.

We see a need for rapid change to create more equitable, humane and decarbonized transportation systems to meet the accelerating challenges of climate change, loss of social capital (community connectedness) and rising inequality.

Getting things done quickly will require building the tools, protocols and skill sets to expedite change, and identifying people with the authority to change the systems.

Timelines must be set to motivate a speed of progress that can push through inertia and business-as-usual mindsets in order to "move fast and break things" if needed.

At the same time, inclusive community engagement should inform this change. Collaborating with diverse community members can also break down resistance to change and build local champions.

Commitments of Partners

PLACE Initiative made several commitments critical to actionable change:

1. To engage diverse US policy makers and community leaders at the national and subnational level
2. To produce policy resources to change the US urban landscape to be more in line with the New Urban Agenda and SDGs
3. To create and foster the **UrbanXSustainability** think tank

The many speakers and listeners present have commitment in the following way:

1. An open network of professionals that will share ideas and people to engender the right support for new initiatives
2. Policy makers who will help deliver our ideas to reality

Key Results Achieved - Roles and Responsibilities

1. PLACE Initiative will provide the platform, people, and effort needed to produce all content and resources outlined in the action plan
2. CNU will provide the community to engage leading urbanism professionals
3. Various CNU chapters will provide the community to engage leading urbanism professionals, working in partnership with other regional and local organizations

Key Results Achieved - Action Plans

Our UTC resulted in action plans that will help push forward the New Urban Agenda and SDGs.

PLACE Initiative is committed to these action plans:

1. Publish policy and design resources for transportation, natural & working lands, housing, equitable development for BIPOC communities, and urbanism for climate resilience & adaptation.
2. Create a platform and community to share ideas discussed, publish **UrbanismXClimate Change** content, and build far reaching support.
3. Build academic and policy support around new ideas.
4. Create a think tank that is directly connected to national and subnational policy makers, and that works to co-create, share information, and collaborate with both national and international partners around good practices in fields related to urbanism.

UTC Outcomes - The Roadmap

Short Term:

- Build out Housing, Climate Resilience & Adaptation, and Natural & Working Lands policy resources within the next 6 months.
- Provide a policy resource for the executive and legislative local, regional, state, and federal-level government branches

Mid Term:

- Hold a strategic in person retreat within the next 6 months to engage initiative leaders in person.
- Get funded for a strategic think tank within the next year.

Long Term:

- Be the go to resource to deploy strategic urbanism professionals for complex federal and subnational policy initiatives and climate-related disaster preparation, recovery, and rebuilding efforts
- Put urbanism on the map as a potent climate policy solution that can provide the glue to hold together all other climate response efforts
- Create the go to community, platform, consultants, and brand around UrbanismXClimateChange

Solutions and Good Practices

1. 30 by 30 and 50 by 50, which seek to protect and restore 30% of the land area by 2030 and 50% of the land area by 2050 ([Link](#))
2. Timelines must be set to motivate a speed of progress, motivated by a sense of urgency, that can push through inertia and business-as-usual mindsets in order to "move fast and break things" if needed, in order to deliver the necessary solutions in time to be effective ([Link](#))
3. Identify that language is critical, addressing the redlining of the past, and how important it will be to build partnerships with other organizations to deliver a successful Just Transition ([Link](#))
4. Our current divided society impacted by covid has created troubled class-based forces, coupled with economic uncertainty, a sense that the government can do more at the local level, that has ultimately shown that people want immediate change ([Link](#))
5. We can use creative finance strategies through nonprofit and for-profit channels to organize buildings with a mix of market rate, commercial, residential, and affordable options. ([Link](#))
6. Taxation needs to be revised to stop subsidizing homeownership for those with least need --the top 30% in the income ladder and to end the financialization and commodification of housing. End all other tax credits, tax deductions and privileged treatment for capital gains and give the lowest income renters and homeowners a tax credit--making US tax policy progressive once again. ([Link](#)) Land Value Taxation should be coupled with policies that provide protection for low-income homeowners so their property taxes remain based on purchase price + improvements + inflation, not on inflated gentrified neighborhoods ([Link](#))

Media

<https://vimeo.com/574511619/a8be0c8373>