

# Engaging Rochester Communities on Climate Impacts and Action

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the next 50 years,  
Rochester may experience



warmer winters and  
hotter summers.



more short-duration  
summertime droughts.



more days with temperatures  
above 90° F and longer heatwaves  
annually.



about 10% increase in average  
annual rainfall.



two to three times more frequent  
extreme weather events.

Climate Change Resilience Plan. City of Rochester,  
December 2019.  
<https://www.cityofrochester.gov/CCRP/>

## COMMUNITY PARTNER

**Climate Solutions Accelerator** is an organization committed to working on climate solutions in Rochester.

**Mission:** To create a healthier, more equitable, and environmentally sustainable community by catalyzing local efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and address the effects of climate change. They have connected with partners all over the region and beyond to support and encourage community, organizational, and individual action addressing climate change.

Additional References:

COP26 special report on climate change and health: the health argument for climate action. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

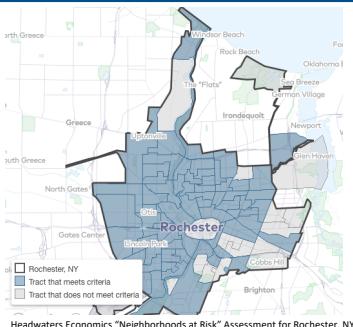
<https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/default.htm>

Watts N, Amman M, Ayeb-Karlsson S, et al. The Lancet countdown on health and climate change: from 25 years of inaction to a global transformation for public health. *Lancet*. 2017; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lane.2017.02.004>.

Climate Solutions Accelerator. "Climate Change and Health in the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region". April 2021.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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Rochester may experience

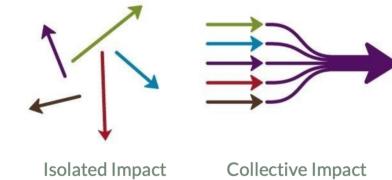


The WHO has called climate change the "single biggest health threat to humanity" (WHO COP26). Climate change affects human health in multiple ways such as those seen on the chart to the right (CDC). The City of Rochester completed a Climate Vulnerability Assessment in 2018 as part of Climate Change Resilience Plan (CCRP) for the city with predictions shown to the left. The map above shows census tracts in Rochester particularly vulnerable to climate change. Climate change is impacting the health of communities in Rochester now with vulnerable populations—those who contributed the least to the issue—at the highest risk.



**FOCUS GROUP:** In order to capture the ideas and thoughts of youth in Rochester, I am working with the Center for Youth in order to organize a focus group with the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Nativity Preparatory Academy. I have reviewed previous focus group presentations and will be adapting a presentation to engage youth to establish a shared understanding of climate change and to gain insights into their perspective and ideas for important solutions. Climate Solutions Accelerator is moving towards a new phase of the Initiative where they will be getting community feedback on some elements of the action plan that are now being developed. This focus group will be occurring in the new year so that those new ideas can be incorporated in order for it to be of most help to the Collective Impact Initiative. Qualitative data will be recorded from this group and shared with Climate Solutions Accelerator.

**HANDOUTS:** In the initial focus groups that Climate Solutions Accelerator hosted, someone from the health focus group recommended making handouts for patients about the intersection of climate change and human health, so I am also working on developing handouts that providers can use to inform patients of the effects of climate change and how they can protect themselves. I have developed basic handouts for extreme heat events, air pollution, and vector-borne diseases as well as a more general handout explaining the overall effects of climate change on human health with each including actions individuals can take to mitigate climate impact. These were developed using CDC resources and will be evaluated by patient-facing providers and patients themselves. There is also a new handout for the Sustainable Homes Rochester Initiative which helps residents access clean heating and cooling technologies adapted from their previous handout using CDC guidelines for communication.



CSA has been working on a **Collective Impact Initiative** to engage cross-sector stakeholders and establish a common understanding of climate change and its human impacts, and to create a shared system of measurement and accountability in order to develop a Climate Action Plan that is derived from the community.

## CONCLUSIONS

Climate change is an issue that impacts our community and people care about taking action on it. Many people have participated in the focus groups Climate Solutions Accelerator has organized. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Nativity Preparatory Academy have students excited to share their thoughts and opinions on this subject. This matters to the people in our community—they have a right to know how it is affecting their health and to be involved in the solutions being generated. They also deserve a healthcare system that is trying to mitigate its contribution to this issue. The healthcare sector has the **responsibility** and **capacity** to address climate change.

If healthcare were a country it would be the 5<sup>th</sup> highest GHG emitter in the world. Healthcare accounts for 7.6% of US emissions. What can we do about this?

01

Raising awareness on climate and health linkages

02

Advocating for health care institutions to take climate action

03

Championing climate-friendly policy change

It is important to discuss the impacts of climate change on human health with patients and colleagues and take actions to reduce healthcare's contribution—connect with Climate Solutions Accelerator to learn more.

## IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

My next steps include finalizing the date in February for the focus group and updating the presentation with the new elements of the action plan for student feedback, and getting feedback on the informational materials I have developed. Then, steps include distributing informational material and continuing to support the CSA's Collective Impact Initiative as solutions are developed and implemented from these focus groups. I am grateful to be a part of CSA's Collective Impact Initiative because I know that the work will continue and that the thoughts and ideas of our community will remain a central part of the work.