

CLIMATE READY PHILLY

2015 OVERVIEW

In June 2015, we conducted a single workshop specifically designed for community leaders. The workshop was titled “Talking About Climate Change” and was held at Drexel’s Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships. Twenty-three community members participated in this workshop. In addition to presentations on the mechanisms of climate change, this workshop sought to engage community leaders on how vulnerable communities can both adapt to climate change and organize to fight it. Workshop organizers screened two videos focused on climate change communication strategies. The videos highlighted energy efficiency tactics specifically. Participants engaged in a lively discussion about whether solar panels offer a cost-effective solution to reduce energy costs. Passive energy use was another key point in our workshop discussion. One community leader stated that the videos, “made me think of my 3 cable boxes, TVs and microwaves that are all on at home right now” in terms of passive electricity usage. Much of the discussion focused on how, in the words of one attendee, “The lower someone is financially, the less they’ll be able to cope” with the effects of climate change.

Following the video screening, facilitators led breakout groups that focused on different communication strategies, which included social media, word of mouth, and photo voice. The workshop concluded with

discussions about how both art and social media might be used to teach people about climate change and organize to combat it.

Highlights from our workshop findings

- The vast majority of workshop attendees reported that, before the workshop, they had principally received their education about climate change from local and national news programs. Only three of the 19 participants who responded to our survey reported having learned about climate change in school or through their child[ren]’s school
- When asked what concerned them the most about climate change, a large majority of participants responded that their greatest concern was their health and/or their families health would be affected and “that the government will not be able to respond effectively.” Only a small minority reported feeling concerned that their house would be damaged or destroyed or that their neighborhood would be impacted by worse weather. Because of these findings, we adapted our workshops in subsequent years to focus more attention on home weatherization in a changing climate.
- Participants overwhelmingly reported that if they needed to get information about climate change they would seek it from the Environmental Protection Agency. In contrast, less than a quarter of participants reported they would seek climate change info from the City of Philadelphia
- Following the workshop, all workshop participants were able to identify mold as a potential indoor air quality hazard
- Survey data collected before and after the workshop showed an increase in participant knowledge of methods for improving indoor air quality, including using bleach-free cleaning agents, regularly cleaning bedding and linens, and opening windows. Similarly, there was a significant increase in participant awareness of how flooding could impact their neighborhoods
- Following the workshop, when community leaders were asked what was needed for them to begin using alternative energy sources, the most frequent response was “more information about alternative energy sources and how to use them”
- When asked to rate the usefulness of the workshop, all participants selected either “very useful” or “somewhat useful,” with 86% of participants finding it “very useful”