

PAYNE PHALEN
COMMUNITY CLIMATE CHANGE CONVERSATION
July 2014

SUMMARY REPORT

I. Summary of Process

During Summer 2014, Macalester College worked with the City of Saint Paul and the Science Museum of Minnesota to sponsor a series of community conversations about climate change planning. We developed a model for inclusive community deliberation that engaged racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse citizens to consider how extreme weather will impact their lives. In these community meetings, participants were asked to identify their chief concerns, and to generate actions that address the impacts of climate change. The local understanding of a neighborhood's specific resources and vulnerabilities is invaluable to successful extreme weather preparedness and planning, as only residents understand what is most important to their community and which actions are likely to take root.

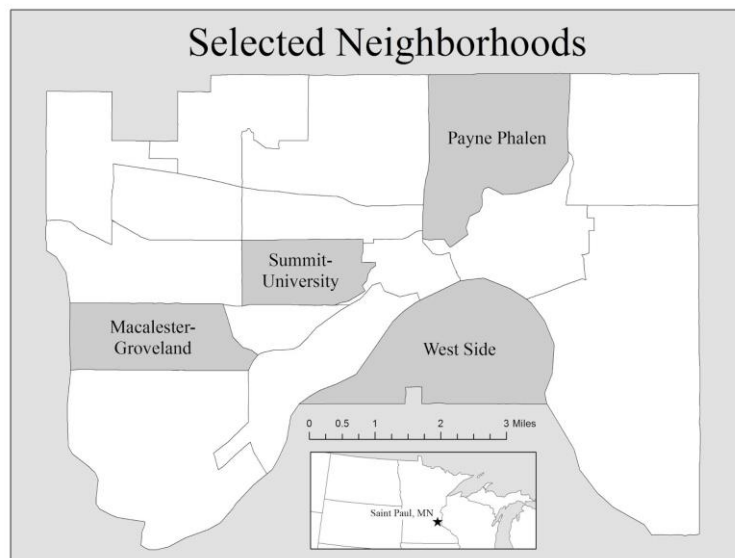


Figure 1. The four neighborhoods where the meetings were held in Saint Paul, MN.

II. The Payne Phalen Community Climate Change Conversation

Payne Phalen (District Five) is one of the most international neighborhoods in St. Paul, as a historic gathering point for Swedish, Italian, and recently Hmong, immigrants. The Community Climate Change Conversation was held at the new Arlington Hills Community Center. Macalester College partnered with community leaders to recruit residents from a variety of backgrounds. Participants included a community organizer, a women’s health nurse, a maintenance mechanic, an adjunct lecturer, a construction foreman, a social worker, a small business owner, a minister, and multiple students. Two of the participants listed themselves as currently unemployed. The residents who participated varied in age and ethnicity. Unlike other neighborhoods, many of the participants were new to the neighborhood, with only one resident who had been in Payne Phalen for more than twenty-five years.

Figure 2: Race and ethnicity of participants

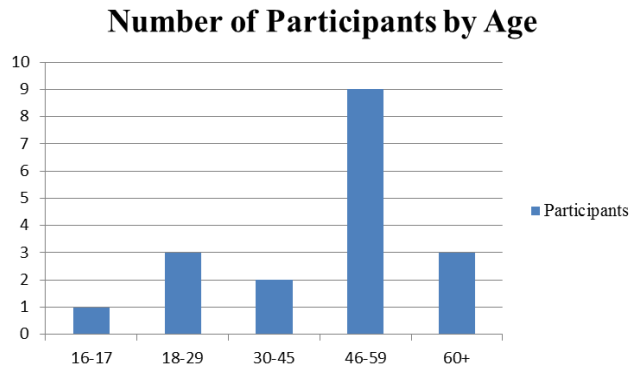
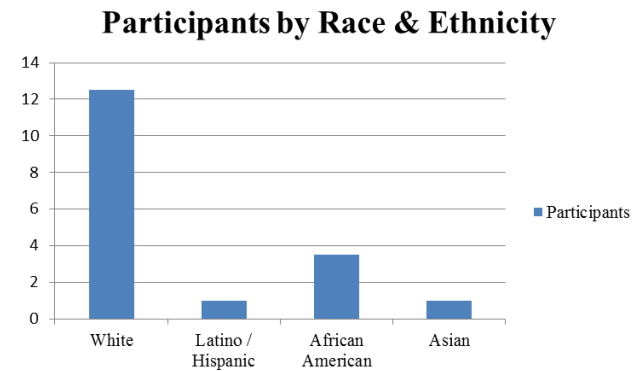


Figure 3: Age distribution of participants from the meeting in Payne Phalen



Years Participants Have Lived in Payne Phalen

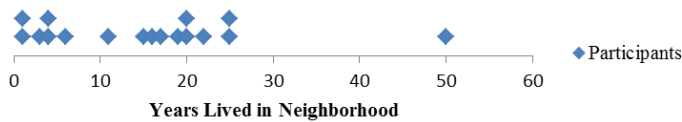


Figure 4: Distribution of time participants have lived in the Payne Phalen neighborhood

The tenor of the meeting was personal, energetic, and thoughtful. Meeting activities and discussions included the following:

- **Mapping Activity:** Participants were encouraged to identify locations on a map that they felt made the community unique. This map served as a tool for thinking about how local landmarks and institutions may serve as resources during extreme weather events.
- **Presentation:** The meeting included a brief background presentation on climate change impacts that highlighted how the Minnesota climate has already changed and is expected to change in the near future.¹
- **Heatwave discussion:** Participants viewed videos, including a narrated photo montage and news footage from the deadly 1995 Chicago heat wave.²
- **Concerns discussion:** Participants discussed their concerns about the potential impacts of extreme weather events, which are expected to increase in severity and frequency across seasons.
- **Prioritizing actions:** The meeting concluded with participants voting on actions they had brainstormed. They prioritized them, and indicated what scale of action (individual, neighborhood, or city) was needed to execute the idea.

III. Concerns

Across all the neighborhoods and discussions, residents recognized that historically marginalized communities were more at risk with increased extreme weather. These communities included:

- The elderly
- Those with pre-existing illnesses and/or disabilities
- Low-income households
- Isolated residents
- Young people

The most prominent concerns in Payne Phalen included the financial burden of preparing and coping with climate impacts, safety and health risks, and a degraded quality of life in the community.

There were three sources of information for this summary: comments from workbooks filled out by participants during the meeting, comments made at the end of the meeting, and pre and post survey results. The student team transcribed and organized comments from all data sources, both written and oral.

¹ The Minnesota Department of Health *Health and Climate* video that was screened at the meeting is available at the following link: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/climatechange/climatevideo.html>

² The *1995 Chicago Heat Wave* video is available at the following link: <http://abcnews.go.com/Archives/video/july-16-1995-hundreds-die-heat-wave-10323044>

A. Financial Burden

The biggest concern for the neighborhood was the financial inaccessibility of air conditioning. Most of the churches and schools in Payne Phalen cannot afford air conditioning, and most residents have older window units. Central air conditioning is rare. Many Railroad Island neighbors, in the southeast of District Five, do not have air conditioning at all. In a heat wave, there are few places to cool off. While residents across Saint Paul may work in places that have AC, many Payne Phalen residents do not have air conditioning in their workplace. The Eastside YMCA was suggested as an option, but requires a fee for entry, making it cost prohibitive for many residents. As one participant stated, “You have to pay to stand in the Y” to cool off during the summer.

Even those that do have air conditioning struggle to cover the costs. One participant was worried about the impacts of higher heating and cooling costs for a neighbor who lived in the large house where she raised her children, and who now struggles to make ends meet with just social security.

During a prolonged heat wave, multiple participants felt they could not miss work. If they were prohibited from working, they were concerned there would be severe financial impacts on their family. This also led to a discussion about concerns about daycare if school were cancelled during an extreme heat event, and parents needing to work.

Beyond coping during an extreme weather event, Payne Phalen participants were also concerned about the increase in daily living expenses as a result of consistently more extreme weather. Higher costs for food, water, insurance, and electricity bills create a significant financial burden that will be felt most by those who are already financially vulnerable.

B. Safety & Health

Payne Phalen participants emphasized the impacts of stress and discomfort from heat waves or extreme storms. They worried that this would lead to an increase in domestic and neighborhood violence. The danger of increased violence both in the home and on the streets was repeated throughout the conversations. Increased crime was a similar concern. One resident commented “When the food supply becomes unstable, and you combine that with the energy supply becoming unstable, things get ugly real quick.”

Participants were also concerned about mobility in icy conditions, a heavy downpour, or an extreme heat event, in Payne Phalen. Elderly and physically disabled residents are particularly at risk for being isolated by icy conditions, or being seriously injured by a fall on a slick sidewalk. Safety risks increase on the roads in heavy downpours, when visibility is decreased and tree limbs break off. These storms in particular have the potential to isolate residents. Participants noted that the risk of heat stroke from being outdoors in an extreme heatwave would also isolate residents.

Another concern was that pre-existing medical conditions, such as dermatological illnesses and autoimmune diseases, are exacerbated by climate change. Residents also acknowledged that simultaneous heat advisories and air advisories could create a difficult environment. Many residents worried about their relatives' asthma. Stress from extreme weather situations will also exacerbate mental illnesses.

A construction foreman voiced his concern about dealing with the heat at work, expanding his worry to all outdoor professions. While heat stroke and other heat-related illnesses can be lethal, many residents often cannot afford to take a day off.

Heat can also inhibit getting a good night's rest. "When we didn't have air conditioning, we would barely sleep at night. So hot, we would wake up in puddles of sweat," said one Payne Phalen resident. "High heat leads to poor sleep, which can make it more dangerous on the road or on the job."

C. Community Quality of Life

Lake Phalen is a treasured asset for East Side residents. As a result, they are concerned about fertilizer runoff during heavy downpours. Similarly, using more salt on icier roads creates another source of pollution. This kind of contamination could cause significant algal blooms in Lake Phalen.

Payne Phalen has many absentee landlords and renters. Participants were concerned because they felt they have a strong connection to their neighbors, but a weaker connection to those transient populations. In a time of repeated crises, these people could easily fall through the cracks.

Anxiety about the coming changes also falls heavily on young people in the community, and their parents. One young person stated, "I'm worried that our generation won't be prepared. We will need to do a lot more than change light bulbs, recycle, and call our Congress people." One resident worried that "more of our children will be killed in the military," as global instability will produce more resource wars. As a neighborhood with strong international ties, global conflict is particularly close to home.

Payne Phalen: Scope of Actions

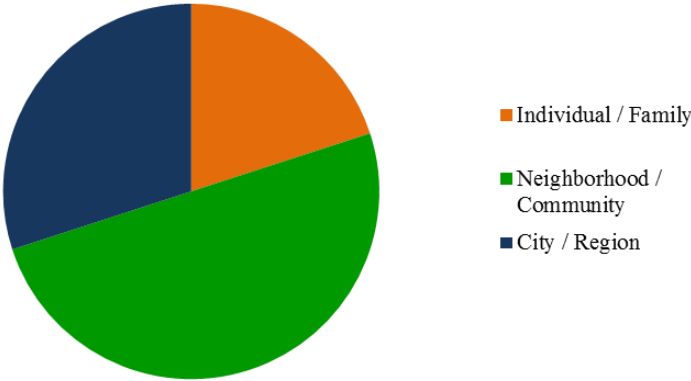


Figure 5: Breakdown of proposed actions by the party responsible, from the Payne Phalen meeting in Saint Paul, MN. This graph includes all actions brainstormed.

IV. Action Recommendations

Payne Phalen residents put a strong emphasis on neighborhood-scope solutions. Not only were there more neighborhood actions brainstormed than individual or city actions, but neighborhood scale actions were also prioritized over other actions. As compared to other neighborhoods, residents suggested fewer city-scope actions.

Payne Phalen Action Priorities

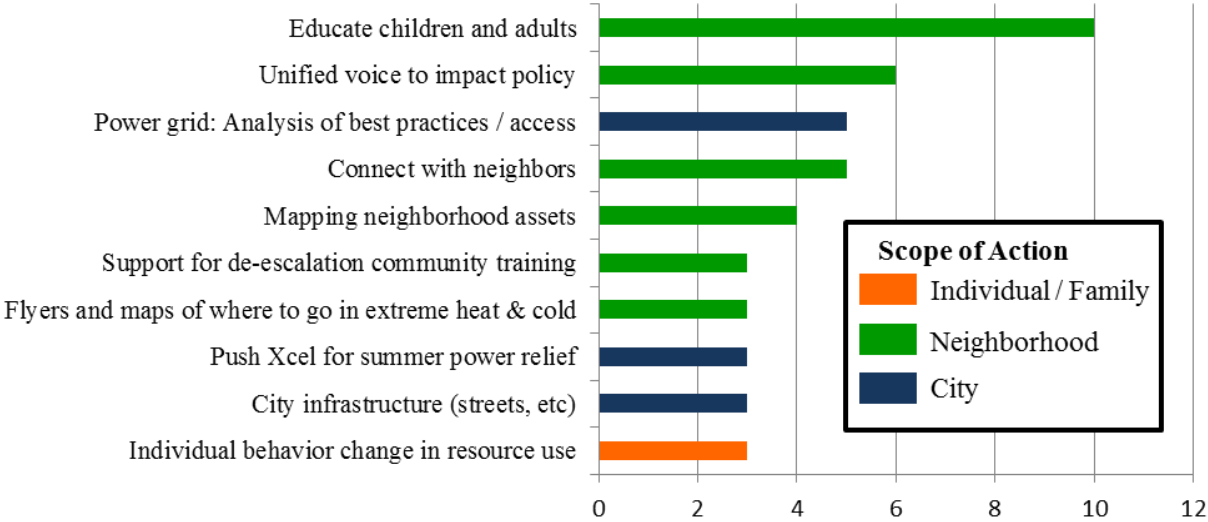


Figure 6: Number of votes for the top 10 prioritized action suggestions from the meeting in Payne Phalen, Saint Paul MN. (The complete list of brainstormed actions can be found in the Appendices).

A. Education: Education of both young people (in schools) and adults (via community partners like the Salvation Army) was the top priority. Participants also emphasized that resources must be available in multiple languages. “We were hoping that the sort of thing you could start to do is develop some sort of educational pamphlet, games, or something that could be specifically designed for breaking out at a community party to help educate about things involving climate change and those sort of things that you could do to prepare,” said one resident.

Residents also wanted de-escalation training to decrease domestic and neighborhood violence. Another specific campaign suggested was to revive emergency preparedness kits. “It used to be back in the day every family was told that they should have some sort of emergency kit with the basics in it, and that sort of educational campaign no longer happens,” said one resident.

B. Energy Policy: Additional power usage and power grid vulnerability came up multiple times throughout Payne Phalen discussions. The focus of the policy discussions was making actions affordable, utilizing free energy audits, and petitioning Xcel Energy to discount electricity for air conditioning during extreme heat. The lack of air conditioning in the Payne Phalen neighborhood prompted ideas about assistance programs to help cover energy costs or help elders. One participant also suggested the need for some kind of study about the feasibility of burying power lines to reduce grid vulnerability.

C. Community: Payne Phalen residents also focused on neighborhood resilience. There are many service organizations in the community. Reaching out to these organization, having a directory, or establishing a coalition, could mobilize a lot of support. Residents also discussed creating a resource map and identifying various kinds of knowledge within the neighborhood. This extended to potentially identifying individuals with expertise, such as knowing how to create a rain garden or use online resources like Next Door, a social media platform for block clubs.

V. Shared Resources & Landmarks

Payne Phalen residents identified locations they felt made the community unique. This map (Figure 9) served as a reference point for thinking about how local resources could be utilized in extreme weather. The colored dots represent places chosen by residents, with clusters illustrating places multiple residents felt were unique to the community. Payne Phalen residents converged on the following locations:

- Lake Phalen
- Swede Hollow
- Johnson High School
- Arlington Hills Community Center
- Payne Avenue
- Eastside YMCA



Figure 9: Satellite image of Payne Phalen neighborhood, marked by residents to indicate important landmarks

VI. Impacts of the meeting

Residents left feeling responsible for continuing discussions, and more informed about how to move forward, committing to follow up on proposed neighborhood and individual actions. “You know, one of the good things that was brought up today that I could walk away with...is I don’t have an emergency backup plan, but I have an eight-year-old little girl and that’s not cool,” reflected one resident. Overall, there was also a significant increase in how knowledgeable participants felt about dealing with climate change.

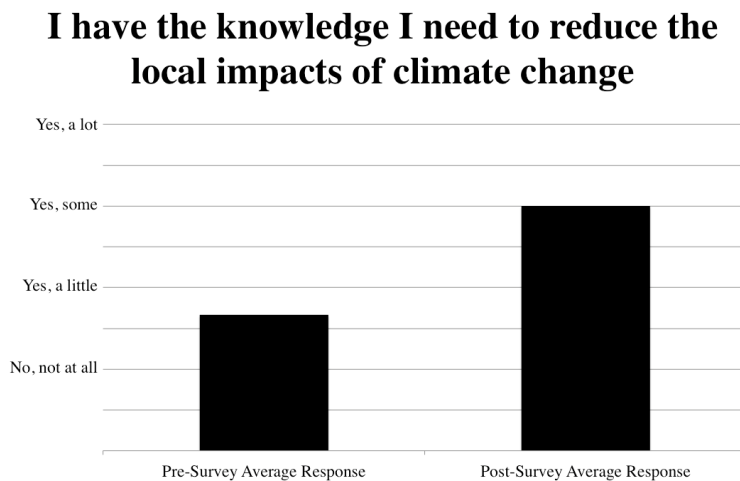


Figure 10: Change in opinion between pre and post meeting for Payne Phalen, Saint Paul, MN.

Residents wanted to make sure that the results of the meeting were actually considered by decision makers at the district and city level, and were appreciative of the opportunity to meet and communicate about climate change preparedness. Residents who participated said:

- "I got a taste of what can happen when people come together and it's a rare thing. It doesn't happen every day. You don't get ten people from the surrounding community to share their thoughts in a communal way....We're isolated from each other so this has been kind of cathartic for me just to see what other people think."
- "[The most valuable aspect of today's meeting was] learning about the concerns and the many different ideas when creating the action plan."
- "[The most valuable aspect of today's meetings was] making the impact of climate change more personal."
- "I think just knowing we're part of the community and having a say in what's going on is really meaningful."

Representatives from both the City of Saint Paul and the District 5 Planning Council participated in the meeting. "I think people want more knowledge about climate change and the impacts in Minnesota and in particular the Twin Cities area, but also about existing resources about solutions," said Anne Hunt, the Environmental Policy Director for the Mayor's Office. "I think you all were really concerned...about the most vulnerable in the community, about the older adults but also people with less-able bodies, or with pre-existing health conditions, and want the City to be always very cognizant of being inclusive and having that equity piece in all the work we are doing going forward."

As a representative of the District Council, Bill Zijacek commented that "The District Council is a planning body, meaning a lot of people bring their plans to the District Council before they go downtown, and they usually take our advice." He noted that since the Council deal with planning concepts and standards, there is opportunity to take up elements of the action plans with local leaders.

VII. Conclusions

Residents know best their community resources, vulnerabilities, and needs. Their experiences are essential to understanding and predicting the potential effectiveness of any proposed actions. Payne Phalen residents were consistently concerned about **affordability** and **accessibility** throughout all of their conversations. These were key metrics for judging how important each action was during discussions.

Payne Phalen has a broad range of income diversity, so residents were adamant that all actions alleviate some of the financial burden anticipated from extreme weather events. Affordability programs for emergency resources and energy preparedness (such as air conditioning) were emphasized.

Residents also focused on accessibility of resources and educational materials. Given the diversity of languages spoken in Payne Phalen, having information available in Hmong, Spanish, and Somali is important. Overcoming physical barriers, such as illness, mobility and distance, was equally important to residents.

Acknowledgements:

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- Bill Zajicek, District Five Environment Committee
- Robert Garfinkle, Science Museum of Minnesota
- Anne Hunt, Environmental Policy Director, Saint Paul Mayor's Office
- Pa Vang Goldbeck, Saint Paul Mayor's Office

Appendix A: Complete Action List

Scope, as determined by the Payne Phalen meeting participants:

■ = City level action; ■ = Neighborhood level action; ■ = Individual level action

1. Educate children (mandatory class) and adults (Salvation Army?)
2. Unified voice to impact policy
3. Power grid: analysis of best practices to ensure the most access (engineers suggest burying power lines)
4. Mapping neighborhood assets
5. Individual behavior change (resource use)
6. Connect with neighbors (community gardens, Next Door site)
7. Flyers and maps of where to go in case of high heat or extreme cold (emergency shelters)
8. Support for community mediation and de-escalation techniques
9. City infrastructure (e.g. wind mills, semi-permeable surfaces, street maintenance & planning)
10. Push Xcel for summer power relief
11. Rain gardens to help filter rainwater
12. Lawn alternatives that require less / no water
13. City could plant more food plants (fruit trees, herbs, vegetables, and pollinator-friendly plants)
14. Recycled air conditioner units and discount community store
15. Emergency phones (hard wired phones available to the public in case of power outages)
16. City energy plan in case of emergency
17. Local relief programs (Salvation Army?)
18. Evaluate past disasters
19. Rooftop gardens to reduce "heat island" effects
20. call 211

Appendix B: Photos

Select photos will be integrated into the body of the report.

