Youth State of the Climate Report

Climate Change Threats and Opportunities in New Haven

Rosie Hampson, student Cross HS

I don't know anything that is more terrifying than the impacts of climate change. Yet I have so much to be thankful for. And for the ability to live without fear of losing my home or family members to an unprecedented disaster. I am deeply thankful for all of these things, which climate change has robbed from many youth in poor communities and developing countries.

Bahati Mulungula, student Career HS

Listening to the ocean isn't just about hearing waves. To truly listen is to realize we are connected. Taking care of the ocean is like taking care of ourselves. Each wave is a gentle reminder to stop, to think, and to protect what we love.

Sophia Rivkin (right), student Coop HS

Although the disasters I stated happened in different states, climate impacts affect every human being that walks the Earth. As fellow citizens of Earth, these climate disasters should shake every one of us. So long as inaction occurs here in New Haven, the city many of us call home will be contributing to such disasters.

Patricia Joseph, student, ESUMS HS

Climate debt means a stolen healthy future for the youth. The looming, disastrous future will soon be our present for our adult lives. It is us as youth who will have to deal with the sweltering heat and extreme weather as we attend secondary education, enter the workforce, or simply attempt to go on with daily life. We need to pay attention to what we're doing to our planet.

Jack Grindley, student Coop HS

"My house (on the East Shore) is gonna go," Grindley says matter-of-factly. "It's scary," Grindley said of climate change. "It's a part of the world now. And it's not really something that I should really—" he paused. "Well, of course, I should worry about it, but not overly stress about, because stressing won't make things better; doing will make things better." (CT Mirror article 8.11.24)

NEW HAVEN CLIMATE MOVEMENT

Image: New Haven area flood map

A Growing Threat.....

Five years ago the Board of Alders and Mayor passed the **New Haven Climate Emergency Resolution**. The Resolution states, *"NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the City of New Haven declares an existential climate emergency that threatens our city, region, state, nation, civilization, the natural world, and humanity."* **Since then, the City has taken some steps to reduce climate pollution, but is far from making the cuts necessary to do our part to limit climate destruction or reach net-zero emissions.**

The challenges we face are enormous, but as the UN states, failure to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 42% by 2030 would bring debilitating impacts to people, the planet, and economies. We are rapidly approaching an era of climate catastrophe that will push the Earth's systems past the point of human adaptation capabilities.

The impacts of human-induced climate change will not be Earth shattering at any given moment, but they will be increasingly disruptive and expensive to adapt to and recover from, We also face the risk of passing ecosystem tipping points. Climate change is already making us poorer by raising the cost of insurance, food, and adaptation. It is also making us sicker, with new and more resistant diseases, more heat waves, more air pollution from wild fires, and and increased anxiety about climate.

As Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, a marine biologist and policy expert, stated, "Half assed action in the face of potential doom is an indisputably absurd choice, especially given that we already have most of the climate solutions we need, heaps of them. Moving forward requires that we propel each other, propel our species, out of a phenomenally entrenched procrastination. We don't need more data or a more rigorous cost benefit analysis. We need action."

Key New Haven Climate Status Markers

New Haven climate work so far has been on the margins. That there have been no big political struggles in New Haven over energy and climate policy reflects the failure so far to take on building and transportation fossil fuel dominance.

The vast growth of large new buildings since 2013 (close to 60 projects) - and their dependence on fossil fuels for operations - commits New Haven to decades of increased building climate pollution.

Since 2004, the New Haven community (business, government, individuals, universities,etc) has emitted close to 20 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions, creating a climate debt of $4 billion ($200/ton).

Reasons to invest more in climate solutions:

- Climate debt: it is wrong to dump our pollution on our children or other poorer communities globally.
- Leadership: help move region and state ahead.
- Environmental justice: fossil fuel use disproportionately harms low income and BIPOC communities.
- Create green jobs.
- Improve public health.
- Build resiliency for future climate shocks.
- Reducing energy waste saves money.
- Increase local resilient clean energy supply.
- Change in transportation and energy systems and takes time.
- By the time we face climate chaos, it'll be too late to act

New Haven Growing Costs and Impacts

New Haven is already committed to invest over $200 million in flood prevention and sea level rise measures to protect just the Long Wharf and train stations areas. Climate change will be increasingly expensive and damaging to public health and well being.
Below are some of the longer term impacts New Haven will face:

Sea level rise: Connecticut predicts sea level will rise in the state by close to two feet over the coming decades. A number of new studies raise concerns that the rate of ice melting in Antarctica and Greenland is accelerating.

I**mpacted local ecosystems**: Most analysis of climate impacts focus on human costs, but the increasing heat, flooding and sea level rise will damage and destroy much of the beautiful coastal Connecticut ecosystems that play an important role in the health of the Long Island Sound region.

Extreme weather: The warming climate and ocean intensify the power of storms and rain events, which overwhelm storm water and flood control systems (like in North Carolina this year). The cost of hurricane damage alone in 2024 in the United States is an estimated $300B.

Economic/energy disruptions: Rising temperatures, heavier rainfall and more frequent and intense extreme weather are projected to cause **$38tn of destruction each year** by mid-century, according to research recently published in the journal Nature.

Heat waves: In 2023, people were exposed to, on average, an unprecedented 50 more days of health-threatening temperatures than would be expected without climate change. Extreme drought affected 48% of the global land area - the second-highest level ever recorded.

Displacement: New Haven will need to serve more displaced families as a result of the increasing extreme weather events. Locally, in 2017 JUNTA For Progressive Action worked with over 425 families from Puerto Rico who were displaced by Hurricane Maria.

Rising food costs: Looking at temperatures and other climate factors in 121 nations since 1996, researchers calculate that “weather and climate shocks” will cause the **cost of food to rise 1.5 to 1.8 percentage points annually** within a decade or so.

Current Fossil Fuel Damage/Costs to New Haven

Fossil fuel pollution harms New Haven residents daily, shortening life expectancy and raising health care costs, with particularly damaging impacts in marginalized communities.

Connecticut does not produce fossil fuels, so shifting to local clean energy and increasing energy efficiency reduces the billions of dollars in fossil fuel purchased each year out of state. **Fact: Solar panels just on parking lots in Connecticut could produce more than a third of Connecticut’s electricity. (Source: PACE)**

Burning fossil fuels in transportation is extremely wasteful and warms the City, exacerbating rising temperatures. Fact: Electric motors convert over 85 percent of electrical energy into mechanical energy, or motion, compared to less than 40 percent for a gas combustion engine which produces a lot of waste heat. (Source: NRDC)

Imagine a New Haven where...

All students learning about energy savings, healthy food, and transportation options.

All homes being retrofitted to reduce energy waste, especially low income homes, which makes them more resilient to heat waves.

Local air pollution reduced through increased use of electricity to power homes and transportation, and students no longer breath diesel bus fumes.

Redesigned streets allow all to get around safely and affordably without the need for a car.

Local institutions each take a lead on implementing climate solutions.

Growing number of energy and green jobs.

Following a new economic development plan that respects the real limits of global ecosystems.

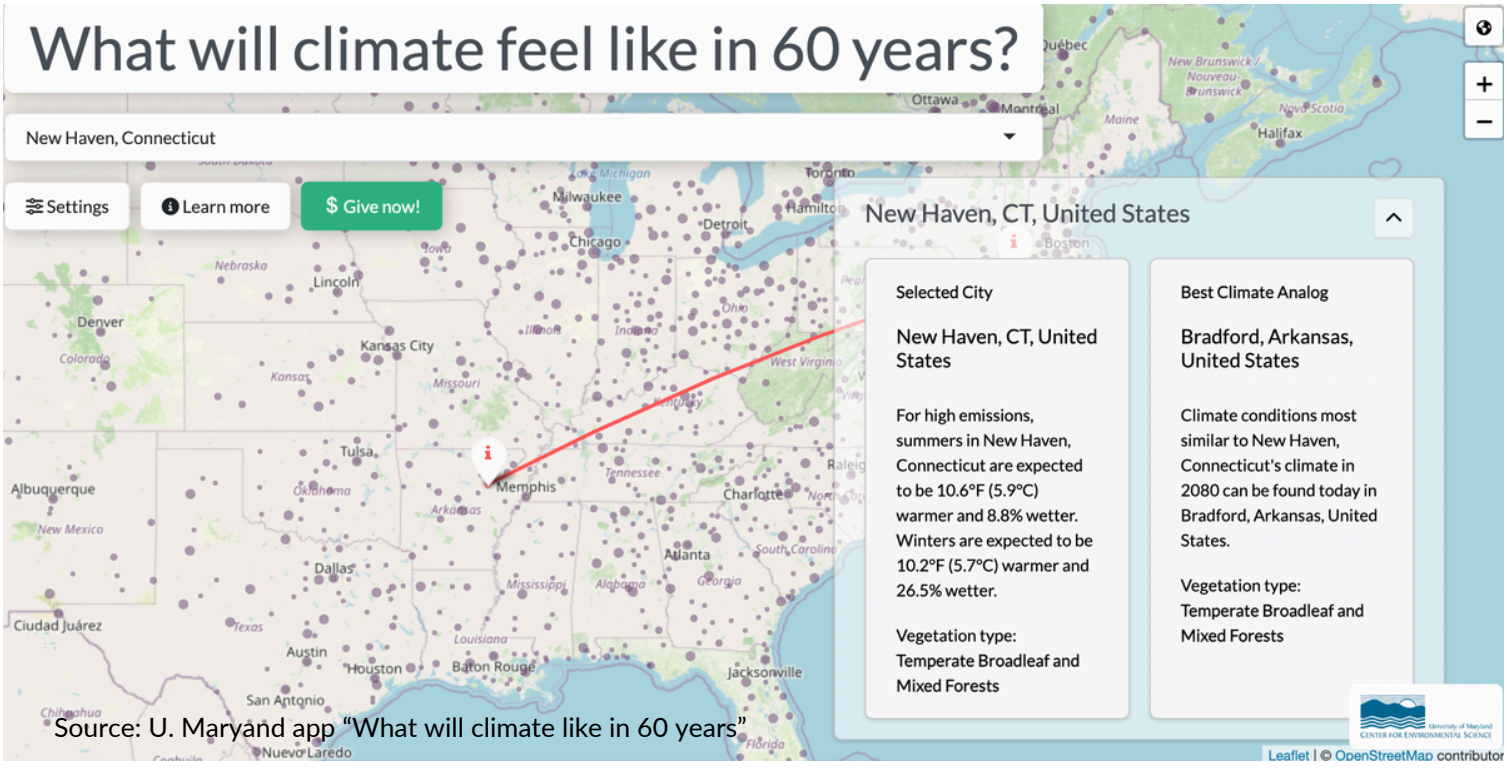
All students having access to free bus passes to grow bus usage and reduce air pollution.

Needed:

- City funding on top of Federal and State resources.
- Commitment to fund climate office past 2026.
- Transportation staff to guide transitions.
- Mobilize other local institutions to work on building energy and transportation.
- New income streams, pollution fees, or committed climate fund.
- New building policies to encourage efficient and clean energy construction.
- Clear plan/timeline how to cut fossil fuel use.
- Free bus passes for youth to increase bus riding long term and save families money.
- Climate projects that improve neighborhood quality of life.

Is Connecticut moving to Arkansas?

Scientists are tracking changes in global temperatures and the warming will significantly changeo ur local climate.



Source: U. Maryand app "What will climate like in 60 years"

*The **New Haven Climate Movement** is an inter-generational grassroots organization of New Haven area residents that pushes for strong action on climate change in New Haven by mobilizing community residents and local organizations to learn about and act on the climate emergency. We fight for government policies and investments that will restore a safe climate and create a just future for all.*

newhavenclimatemovement.org