2023 EXTREME HEAT POLICY AGENDA

Recommendations to Protect Vulnerable Populations in New York City from Extreme Heat Events and Mitigate Health Risks
WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Empowering Communities to Power Change

WE ACT for Environmental Justice was started in 1988 when three fearless community leaders saw that environmental racism was rampant in their West Harlem neighborhood, and they demanded community-driven, political change. Today, the organization is considered an active and respected participant in the national Environmental Justice Movement.

WE ACT's mission is to build healthy communities by ensuring that people of color and/or low income residents participate meaningfully in the creation of sound and fair environmental health and protection policies and practices.
INTRODUCTION

Climate change is causing average global temperatures to increase. Extreme heat events provoke a myriad of adverse health impacts including dehydration, dizziness, fainting, and mortality. Due to systemic racism and pervasive inequalities, Black and Latinx communities, low-income households, and elderly people are disproportionately affected by these heat-related health outcomes. WE ACT for Environmental Justice’s Heat, Health, and Equity Initiative (HHEI) aims to protect New York City’s vulnerable populations from extreme heat. Over the next three years, the initiative’s main objectives are to:

- Amend state policy so that Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds are used to transition New York City homes to cleaner and more efficient forms of cooling.
- Support policy reform that addresses the City’s rising temperatures.
- Streamline access to energy efficiency and low emissions cooling technologies for low-income residents.
- Strengthen the City’s emergency planning during extreme heat events.
- Increase the utilization of and improve the services provided by New York City’s Cooling Center Program.
- Increase communication with vulnerable populations to raise awareness about extreme heat and its health impacts.
- Increase green design and renewable energy production to promote natural cooling.

The Extreme Heat Coalition we launched this year will expand our capacity to pursue these objectives, both in New York City and other urban areas across the state. The coalition works to ensure urban historically marginalized and vulnerable communities facing extreme heat are protected through policy, adaptation planning, and resilient infrastructure interventions that advance health equity. It is essential that we move beyond poor distribution of green infrastructure, energy insecurity, and reactive heat emergency communications toward cooler urban environments, better resourced community members, and proactive climate harm reduction strategies.

Swift and robust government action is needed to proactively prepare New York City for rising temperatures and mitigate the corresponding health risks. There are opportunities that can be leveraged to have a tangible impact in addressing heat health inequities. The New York State Bond Act and the Inflation Reduction Act are unique opportunities to invest in climate resilience at the household and community level to combat extreme heat. New York City leadership should act swiftly to take advantage of this unprecedented abundance to cool the built environment in heat-vulnerable disadvantaged communities.
New York City is particularly susceptible to rising temperatures because its physical design characteristics amplify the urban heat island effect. New York City’s struggle with inequality causes extreme heat events to disproportionately affect certain populations and neighborhoods (Table 1). For example, neighborhoods in East Harlem, Central Harlem, and the South Bronx have some of the highest scores on the heat vulnerability index, a measurement of risk to heat-related illness or death. Additionally, low income and elderly people are more susceptible to adverse health impacts related to extreme heat. Much of this inequity comes from structural and historical racism, forcing low-income and people of color in New York City to:

- live in older, poorly maintained apartment buildings;
- live in crowded apartments with intergenerational living;
- live in neighborhoods with less green space;
- live in neighborhoods with more air pollution from buildings and industrial sites; and
- stretch their resilience and their means across many hardships, such as food, rent, chronic illness, and immigration status.

Figure 1. In New York City, Black people die of heat-related illness at a disproportionately high rate. Because of this, neighborhoods with more Black residents are more greatly impacted by extreme heat. These disparities stem from structural racism, which includes neighborhood disinvestment, racist housing policies, fewer job opportunities and lower pay, and less access to high-quality education and health care.
Table 1. Heat-related health complications are exacerbated by other health conditions and socioeconomic indicators of vulnerability, including age, race, income, and employment. These characteristics can overlap to create cumulative impacts that compound health risks.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>HEALTH</th>
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<td>People with chronic illnesses, such as cardiovascular, renal, and respiratory diseases, are more susceptible to heat stress and health complications on hot days.⁴</td>
<td>Elderly people are more prone to heat illness due to increased isolation and pre-existing health challenges.⁵</td>
<td>People of color are more vulnerable to energy insecurity, especially African Americans. For example, in Washington Heights, energy-insecure households are predominantly Black/African American and Latinx.⁷</td>
<td>Low-income families are more likely to be burdened by home energy insecurity and unable to pay for cooling and health services.⁹</td>
<td>Certain jobs require work to be done in extreme temperature conditions that expose employees to environmental hazards and increase health risks.¹¹ This is especially true for essential workers during COVID-19.</td>
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<td>Children with pre-existing health conditions, such as asthma, are also at-risk during heat events. Like the elderly, children tend to spend more of their time indoors, which heightens their exposure to hot temperatures.⁶</td>
<td>Fifty percent of the heat-related deaths in New York City are Black people, despite comprising just 25 percent of the City’s population.⁸</td>
<td>People experiencing homelessness have increased exposure to hot temperatures, struggle to access health services, and are often stigmatized, making it difficult to gain admission to cooling centers.¹⁰</td>
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Figure 2. The Heat Vulnerability Index (HVI) shows neighborhoods whose residents are more at risk for dying during and immediately following extreme heat. The darker the color of the neighborhood, the higher the heat vulnerability index score (key depicted in top left corner). Gray shapes on the map are unscored areas. It uses a statistical model to summarize the most important social and environmental factors that contribute to neighborhood heat risk. The factors included in the HVI are surface temperature, green space, access to home air conditioning, and the percentage of residents who are low-income or non-Latinx Black.¹²
Recommendation 1: Allocate more funding to the LIHEAP program to subsidize summer utility bills.

The New York State LIHEAP program allocates the majority of its funding to heating services. Just 4% of its budget is apportioned to cooling needs. Summers are getting longer and hotter in New York City, and with massive energy burden rates in New York combined with increasing utility rates, many low-income households will suffer in the heat to avoid the cost of running an air conditioner. In order to adapt to the future of climate change, more financial capital is needed to increase the use of cooling technologies in New York City homes by expanding LIHEAP’s Cooling Assistance Program. Currently, LIHEAP funding is only enough to provide eligible residents with an air conditioner worth up to $800 in value every five years. This is not helpful if the residents cannot afford to run the air conditioner. The State must get more federal funding for the program in order to subsidize the cost of electricity for running air conditioners in the summer months. There are already several state models that serve as use cases for a more robust energy safety net, including California’s sliding scale, need-based model, which distributes $200-$800 in assistance funds or New Jersey’s flat $300 benefit. Now is the time for New York’s legislature to demonstrate its stated values by advocating for more federal funding to be allocated to the Cooling Assistance Program.
OBJECTIVE 2

ADVOCATE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION IN THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL TO MITIGATE EXTREME HEAT IMPACTS.

Recommendation 1: Support legislation to codify cooling centers in New York City.

WE ACT is working with New York City Council to develop legislation which would require that the City:

- Codify the City’s cooling center program.
- Set a minimum number of centers based on where heat vulnerable populations reside.
- Institute a process for engaging local communities through a public education campaign (that includes both digital and physical advertisements) to raise awareness about cooling infrastructure.
- Require that New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) conduct a survey of program utilization and report it annually to the Mayor and the Council.
- Allocate a budget specifically for cooling centers through the New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM).¹⁵
- Require locations that receive funding to serve as a cooling center to be open for every heat advisory.
- Require locations that receive funding to serve as a cooling center to put up appropriate signage and train staff in how to identify heat related illness.
- Have designated cooling centers that have extended, evening hours.
- Provide programming at cooling center locations to make them desirable places to visit.
Recommendation 2: Pass legislation to limit indoor temperatures.

High indoor temperatures present a considerable risk to New Yorkers due in part to limited temperature fluctuation from day to night within urban dwellings.\textsuperscript{15} Researchers have observed a strong association between high temperatures that are sustained overnight into the following morning and heat-related mortality. To help heat vulnerable New Yorkers acclimatize to such conditions, there must be policy interventions that protect their right to cooling. In the same way building codes recognize a right to heating and running water for all tenants, it should ensure that every resident is guaranteed the means to prevent their homes from reaching dangerously high temperatures. PlaNYC outlines a need for such a policy, and this must happen quickly.

Recommendation 3: Introduce bills that survey and support the adoption of green infrastructure in environmental justice and heat vulnerable communities.

The New York City Council must introduce bills that promote research, design, and implementation of more solar on rooftops. A study conducted by researchers at UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering concluded that solar panels could reduce the amount of heat reaching roofs by up to 38%.\textsuperscript{17} Likewise, Stuart Gaffin, a climatologist at Columbia University’s Center for Climate Systems Research, demonstrated that green roofs can cool near-surface air temperatures by an average of 16.4 °C per unit area. Thus, increasing solar serves as both an adaptation and mitigation strategy by reducing heat absorption and greenhouse gas emissions.\textsuperscript{18} Additionally, the City must deploy cool and permeable surfaces to cool the public right of way. Cool and permeable pavements or reflective pavement coatings can decrease ambient air temperatures, on average by 4°F to 9°F when used alongside cool roofs and shade trees.\textsuperscript{19}
We need urgent legislative action on other bills introduced during this session of New York City Council to expand green infrastructure in neighborhoods with the highest heat vulnerability:

- **Introduction 0102-2022**: Requiring the department of environmental protection to post a map of green roofs online. This bill would require the Department of Environmental Protection to post on its website a map of all green roofs in the city. The map would also include some information about each green roof, including the type of building, the area of the roof and the area covered by the green roof system, the capacity of the green roof to absorb water and the function or functions of the green roof.  

- **Introduction 0233-2022**: Requiring the DOE to conduct a study on the feasibility of installing green roofs on schools. This bill would require the New York City Department of Education to conduct a study, in consultation with the School Construction Authority, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, and the New York City Department of Buildings, on the feasibility of installing green roofs on at least two schools in each community school district.  

- **Introduction 0495-2022**: Requiring DOT to conduct a pilot project on the use of cool pavement. This bill would require the Department of Transportation to conduct a pilot project on the use of cool pavement on City streets—pavement and pavement coatings designed to keep area temperatures cooler than traditional asphalt and thus combat the urban heat island effect. The Department must then submit a report to the mayor and Council on the results of the pilot project.

**Recommendation 4: City Council should codify a holistic, coordinated, and equitable approach to securing a future for New York City’s urban canopy.**

While tree planting initiatives carried forward by the Bloomberg and De Blasio administrations substantially increased tree cover in New York City, low-income neighborhoods of color still have inequitable access to the environmental services trees offer. For example, much of the cooling benefit of trees can be felt on park land. In New York City, predominantly Black neighborhoods contain roughly a quarter of the park acreage when compared to white neighborhoods. Likewise, the city has struggled to care for and grow the urban canopy in a permanent and strategic way. As of January 2023, the number of trees planted this fiscal year is the fewest planted in the first quarter since 2008.
While there are many contributing factors to this, the most prominent is a lack of funding for the Department of Parks and Recreation. WE ACT alongside the Department and a multitude of green organizations have appealed to New York City Mayor Eric Adams to follow through with his campaign promise to allocate 1% of the City’s operating budget to our parks. In support of this budget ask, there must be procedural changes as well. To ensure consistent, long-term funding and maintenance of New York’s urban canopy as well as better interagency coordination to steward it, the following Introductions should be passed by the City Council:

- **Introduction 1065-2023**: An urban forest master plan. This bill would require the Department of Parks and Recreation, in consultation with any other appropriate City Departments, State Agencies or Authorities, and any interested non-governmental parties, to create an Urban Forest Master Plan which would be aimed at protecting and increasing the City’s urban forest. It would be aimed at increasing tree and vegetation cover across the city and requires the establishment of goals to expand and protect the urban forest. The plan would be required to be updated every five years. It would also require the City to collect LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data to monitor the effectiveness of the plan.

- **Introduction 0259-2022**: Preservation of trees on private and public property. This bill would require the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to restrict the removal or destruction of certain types of trees on public and private property. It would prohibit any person or entity from removing a heritage tree (a tree with a trunk circumference that is 100 inches or more) or a special tree (a tree with a trunk circumference between 55 inches and 99 inches) without first having obtained a permit from DPR. A heritage tree would only be allowed to be removed if such tree posed a danger to public safety or is diseased and dying.²⁴
Recommendation 1: Preemptively set minimum temperatures for larger buildings to reduce energy loads.

In the summer of 2019, the City required owners and operators of large office buildings and department stores to set their thermostats to 78°F to conserve energy. This executive order was done to prevent blackouts caused by excessive energy demand. During the summer, indoor temperatures can surpass outdoor temperatures, especially for households without air conditioners and during blackout and brownout periods. Mayor Adams should preemptively institute this simple energy conservation method. The minimum temperature set for large offices and some commercial buildings should be increased to 78°F for all summer months.

Recommendation 2: Establish a maximum indoor temperature threshold for facilities that house heat vulnerable populations.

The State should require that facilities that support vulnerable populations, such as domestic violence and homeless shelters, senior citizen housing, youth and senior centers, public libraries, and carceral facilities, set a health-based maximum indoor temperature threshold. This threshold should be consistent with what is established by Medicaid.
Recommendation 3: Develop community-led neighborhood-specific heat action plans to protect vulnerable populations during extreme heat events.

The City must work with neighborhoods to create heat action plans. Community boards and local community-based organizations (CBOs) can be engaged to lead the work. It is vital for the City to provide a platform for community members, especially vulnerable populations that are most impacted by extreme heat, to learn about the health risks they are exposed to and actively participate in developing plans to mitigate and respond to rising temperatures. This community-involved effort will not only result in better plans, but it will increase awareness and risk perception of extreme heat amongst vulnerable communities.

WE ACT recently developed a neighborhood action plan for uptown residents in partnership with the East Harlem COAD and Harlem Emergency Network to help households living in Northern Manhattan understand and prepare for summer climate risks related to extreme heat and flooding. The Climate Ready Uptown Plan is a physical pamphlet that educates individuals and their families on how to prepare for extreme heat events, recognize the signs of heat related illness and build communication networks with vulnerable neighbors and community members. The plan also includes an interactive map to help uptown residents better understand their local climate risks. WE ACT members in the Climate Justice Working Group had the original idea for a local climate related emergency tool, and community members led the planning, research, design, and distribution of the final product.
Recommendation 1: Develop and strengthen neighborhood-specific communication plans that promote the use of cooling centers.

Advertisement of cooling centers has not proved successful in the past. The City’s heat plan needs to incorporate a communication strategy so that community members are familiar with the purpose and locations of cooling centers. More outreach with information about heat risks and safety is needed to promote cooling centers. All promotion material should be produced in multiple languages. The City should not rely exclusively on NotifyNYC text messages to alert community members of heat advisories. Despite trends towards a digital format, one third of all households in the city do not have access to the internet, with many of those households concentrated in Upper Manhattan, South Bronx, and Central Brooklyn. Thus, outreach efforts should include physical signage in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings and on transportation services. People are more likely to trust information that comes from a familiar source. All community engagement should therefore be coordinated with local organizations. In neighborhoods that have high heat vulnerability index scores without many libraries or recreation centers, the city should make funding available to community organization partners to act as cooling centers throughout the duration of heat season. Community members report that they prefer centers where they already gather and receive services. Supporting the work of anchor institutions reduces the dependency on communication strategies that shift behavior and instead brings services to residents in familiar spaces.
Recommendation 2: Install and upgrade cooling systems in public school buildings throughout the city.

New York State Governor Kathy Hochul announced in her 2023 State of the State a $59 million “Clean Green Schools” initiative to Improve Air Quality and Reduce Carbon Emissions in Pre-K-12 Schools. Through this program, the City must install and upgrade cooling systems in schools, prioritizing public schools that are in high heat vulnerable neighborhoods, and that are currently burning fuel oil. Not only will better thermal comfort improve academic and health outcomes for children, the program will provide employment opportunities to local residents.
Recommendation 1: Provide additional funding for NYCHA to protect vulnerable residents and improve building efficiency.

Over half of the public housing residents reside in the City’s most heat-vulnerable neighborhoods. NYCHA residents are especially vulnerable to extreme heat. There are more than 62,000 NYCHA tenants over the age of 65. This is the fastest growing age group among NYCHA’s population and the most susceptible to health complications resulting from heat exposure.
Recommendation 2: Remove barriers to air conditioner use.

New York City should focus on providing additional support to NYCHA residents and federal housing residents. NYCHA should have free professional air conditioner installations and waive any additional fees that offset the cost of additional power they consume. It was alarming to learn that NYCHA was threatening to start eviction proceedings for residents that received a free air conditioner the summer of 2020 through the “Get Cool NYC” program if they did not agree to an additional monthly utility fee. While NYCHA has walked back their stance and agreed to cover tenant’s utility costs through October 1, 2023, we believe that utility fees should be waived for all NYCHA residents that need access to an air conditioner.

Recommendation 3: Integrate low-emissions technologies and energy efficiency retrofits.

For long-term solutions to cooling access for vulnerable residents, NYCHA must upgrade building envelopes and install efficient heating and cooling technologies such as heat pumps. In August of 2022, Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams announced a $70 initial investment in the development and production of 30,000 heat pump units for use in NYCHA buildings, as part of the Clean Heat For All Challenge. While this is a good start, NYCHA estimates a need for approximately 156,000 window heat pumps over the next 5-10 years in order to provide clean heating and cooling to its full building portfolio. NYCHA must seize the historic funding opportunities presented by the Inflation Reduction Act, the Environmental Bond Act, and other funding streams to meet the cooling needs of its tenants without increasing their costs or greenhouse gas emissions.
Recommendation 4: Expand access to resiliency hubs in heat-vulnerable neighborhoods.

NYCHA is currently exploring the possibility of retrofitting existing community spaces into resiliency hubs in select locations across the city. Resilience hubs are community-serving facilities augmented to support residents, coordinate communication, distribute resources, and reduce carbon pollution while enhancing quality of life. NYCHA should consider the heat vulnerability index in its selection criteria when considering locations to pilot this new program, and retrofit future resiliency hubs with upgraded, efficient air conditioners, backup generation in the case of a power outage, staff trained in identifying and responding to heat related illness, extra supplies like handheld fans and water, and programming for residents looking to escape the heat.
OBJECTIVE 6

INCREASE THE COLLECTION OF HEAT-RELATED HEALTH DATA, ANALYZE CUMULATIVE IMPACTS, AND SHARE THE FINDINGS WITH THE NEW YORK CITY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY BOARD.

Currently, the City collects, analyzes, and interprets heat-related health data annually as per Local Law 84 of 2020. This data is aggregated demographic information including, but not limited to, the age, gender, neighborhood tabulation area and the race or ethnicity of the residents. This should be complemented with data on the social determinants of health and New York City’s heat vulnerability index to capture the effects of cumulative impacts and identify vulnerable populations. The findings should be shared with the Environmental Justice Advisory Board so that they can recommend meaningful policies and programs. It should also be made publicly available so that community organizations and residents can use it for their outreach and advocacy efforts.
Recommendation 1: Expand and permanently fund the Be a Buddy Program.

The Be a Buddy Program was launched in 2017 to match community-based organizations with at-risk New York City residents. Check-ins from local volunteers help to ensure that the wellbeing of vulnerable populations, especially isolated elderly people, is not compromised during extreme heat events. The Be a Buddy Program was initially a two-year pilot initiative to develop and test strategies. The City must allocate more funding to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to expand the Be a Buddy program to at least five more heat vulnerable neighborhoods by 2024.

Recommendation 2: Develop a partnership between the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management and local television and radio stations.

A survey conducted in New York City reported that 82 percent of the City’s most vulnerable population receives heat-health information from TV. This could be an important tool during this summer since most people, especially elderly, stay indoors when it is hot. In 2018, the City hosted a workshop with meteorologists and health reporters to improve communication about extreme heat and associated health risks. The City should continue to provide such workshops to strengthen partnerships with reporters, thereby increasing the general public’s awareness.
Recommendation 3: Strengthen partnerships with faith communities.

Working with trusted organizations is an important strategy to increase communication channels with vulnerable populations. Thus, collaboration with faith communities should be encouraged as a way to share information about extreme heat with those that regularly attend churches, mosques, temples, and other houses of worship.

Recommendation 4: Require the announcement of extreme heat emergencies through an advance warning system.

The Federal Communications Commission requires that broadcasters and cable operators provide information during immediate weather emergencies, such as hurricanes, floods, and heavy snows. This requirement should be updated to include extreme heat events. Currently, the Federal Communications Commissions must broadcast the information so that it is accessible in English, to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, and to persons who are blind or have visual disabilities.\textsuperscript{34} However, additional language requirements should be offered to increase inclusivity. The Extreme Heat Coalition seeks to inform the roll out of a more proactive, equitable extreme heat emergency announcement in cities experiencing the urban heat island effect. Advanced warning is necessary for community members to plan accordingly for heat disasters. Such announcements should continue to be updated as climate impacts and resident needs evolve.
Objective 8

Implement green design techniques and increase renewable energy production to promote natural cooling and reduce New York City’s carbon footprint.

Recommendation 1: Plant vegetation and expand green spaces in neighborhoods with high heat vulnerability to reduce the urban heat island effect.

Shade from tree covering can help to naturally cool surrounding areas without the use of energy technologies that produce greenhouse gases, such as air conditioners. Many heat vulnerable neighborhoods have less canopy, and this inequitable distribution must be rectified. City agencies should be poised to leverage funds from numerous Inflation Reduction Act-funded programs and the Environmental Bond Act in partnership with community-based organizations to implement urban greening projects informed by community needs.

Recommendation 2: Advocate for equitable distribution of green roofs.

Currently, of the 736 green roofs in New York City, over 300 lie in midtown and downtown Manhattan while the rest are spread through sporadically throughout the city. The City must prioritize installing green roofs in heat-vulnerable neighborhoods.
Recommendation 3: Advocate for increased tree planting and preservation in East Harlem.

An East Harlem street can be up to 31 degrees hotter than Central Park West.\(^{36}\) This is mostly due to the lack of street trees. Researchers at Portland State University found that formerly redlined places, including Harlem, are on average 5°F warmer than non-redlined neighborhoods.\(^{37}\) Trees are vital for mitigating urban heat island effect and can lower temperatures by up to nine degrees, cut air conditioning use by 30%, and reduce heating energy use by a further 20-50%. The “Million More Trees” initiative is vital because of the need to plant more trees along the East 125th Street corridor – one of the areas in New York City with a disproportionate extreme heat burden.

Alongside the planting of new trees, East Harlem cannot afford to lose its mature trees. Most species of juvenile trees cannot provide substantial shade until they are at least 5-10 years old, and they have significantly fewer leaves to cool the air via evapotranspiration. Healthy, mature shade trees can limit temperature increases of shaded surfaces by 20–45°F\(^{38}\) and reduce peak summer temperatures by 2–9°F.\(^{39}\)

The City must work to protect mature trees by adequately funding their maintenance, preventing unnecessary removals, and incentivizing homeowners with trees on their property to keep them alive. Introductions 1065 and 0259 mentioned in Objective 2 are essential pieces of this and city agencies should engage in creative collaboration with residents and community-based organizations to be exhaustive in their efforts.
CONCLUSION

New York City must pursue both short-term and long-term objectives to mitigate the negative impacts that extreme heat can have on the health of vulnerable populations. This will require collaboration and cooperation between government agencies, local organizations, community members, and private companies such as Con Edison. Plans should focus on expanding extreme heat risk perception, increasing LIHEAP funds for the cooling assistance program, advocating for policy reforms, strengthening emergency plans, improving the use and services of cooling centers, supporting changes to City and State protocols, facilitating community-led resiliency planning and implementing green design and energy efficiency retrofits.

Additionally, New York City should analyze and evaluate other cities’ heat initiatives and cooling programs to develop creative and effective policies. For instance, in India, the annual Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan aims to provide a framework for the implementation, coordination, and evaluation of extreme heat response activities across city agencies in Ahmedabad. The plan emphasizes heatwave preparedness and response, and includes four pillars: building public awareness and community outreach; an early warning system and inter-agency coordination; capacity building among health-care professionals; and adaptive efforts to reduce heat in the city. The Plan’s primary objective is to alert those populations most at risk of heat-related illness that extreme heat conditions either exist or are imminent, and to take appropriate precautions. All programs, projects, and policies that New York City implements must champion social equity and prioritize supporting low-income households and people of color. WE ACT would like to see a holistic, multi-city agency approach to mitigating the often fatal impacts of extreme heat.
APPENDIX

List of objectives and corresponding recommendations.

1. Expand LIHEAP to increase access to air conditioners and reduce the economic burden of electricity use for vulnerable populations.
   a. Allocate more funding to the LIHEAP program to subsidize summer utility bills.
   b. Expand LIHEAP program to finance energy efficiency retrofits.
   c. Increase the number of staff at OTDA assigned to LIHEAP.

2. Advocate for legislative action in the City Council to mitigate extreme heat impacts.
   a. Support legislation to codify cooling centers in New York City.
   b. Introduce bills that survey the level of green roof and solar roof penetration in environmental justice and heat vulnerable communities.

3. Coordinate emergency planning strategies during extreme heat events to prevent power outages and promote safety.
   a. Preemptively set minimum temperatures for larger buildings to reduce energy loads.
   b. Establish a maximum indoor temperature threshold for facilities that house heat vulnerable populations.
   c. Securing electricity for the most vulnerable customers.
   d. Improve the delivery of portable generators.
   e. Support heat vulnerable communities in participatory visioning processes with Community Boards to develop plans for resilience to extreme heat.
   f. Develop community-led neighborhood-specific heat action plans to protect vulnerable populations during extreme heat events.

4. Encourage the use of and improve the amenities offered by cooling centers.
   a. Develop and strengthen neighborhood-specific communication plans that promote the use of cooling centers.
   b. Improve cooling center services to create a safer and more enjoyable environment.
   c. Install and upgrade cooling systems in public school buildings throughout the City.

5. Design and implement new City and State protocols to protect vulnerable populations from heat-related health illnesses.
   a. Provide additional funding for NYCHA to protect vulnerable residents and improve building efficiency.
   b. Increase the collection of heat-related health data, analyze cumulative impacts, and share the findings with the Environmental Justice Advisory Board.

6. Implement and expand channels of communication with vulnerable populations to increase awareness of extreme heat impacts.
   a. Expand and permanently fund the Be a Buddy Program.
   b. Develop a partnership between the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management and local television and radio stations.
   c. Strengthen partnerships with faith communities.
   d. Require the announcement of extreme heat emergencies through the emergency broadcast system.

7. Implement green design techniques and increase renewable energy production to promote natural cooling and reduce New York City’s carbon footprint.
   a. Plant vegetation and expand green spaces in neighborhoods with high heat vulnerability to reduce the urban heat island effect.
   b. Advocate for equitable distribution of green roofs.
   c. Increase research and investment in renewable energy sources.
   d. Advocate for increased tree planting in East Harlem.
ENDNOTES

20. Requiring the department of environmental protection to post a map of green roofs online, Int 0102-2022, New York City.
21. Requiring the DOE to conduct a study on the feasibility of installing green roofs on schools, Int 0233-2022, New York City.
27. NYC Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer. “Truth in Broadband: Access and Connectivity in New York City,” April 2018
31. Siobhan Watson et. al. “Climate Change at NYCHA: A Plan to Adapt,” New York City Housing Authority October 2021,