

RESILIENT TOGETHER

One Climate. One Community.

INTRODUCTION

It's been one year since our launch of the Resilient Together collaboration. In this report, you'll find a summary of the themes, guiding principles, and goals that emerged from our first two project phases.

At the end of May, we completed the Discover phase, having held workshops with staff from the County, City, UVA, partner agencies, and community organizations. Additionally, we reviewed extensive notes from community engagement conducted during other recent planning processes like AC44 and Cville Plans Together.

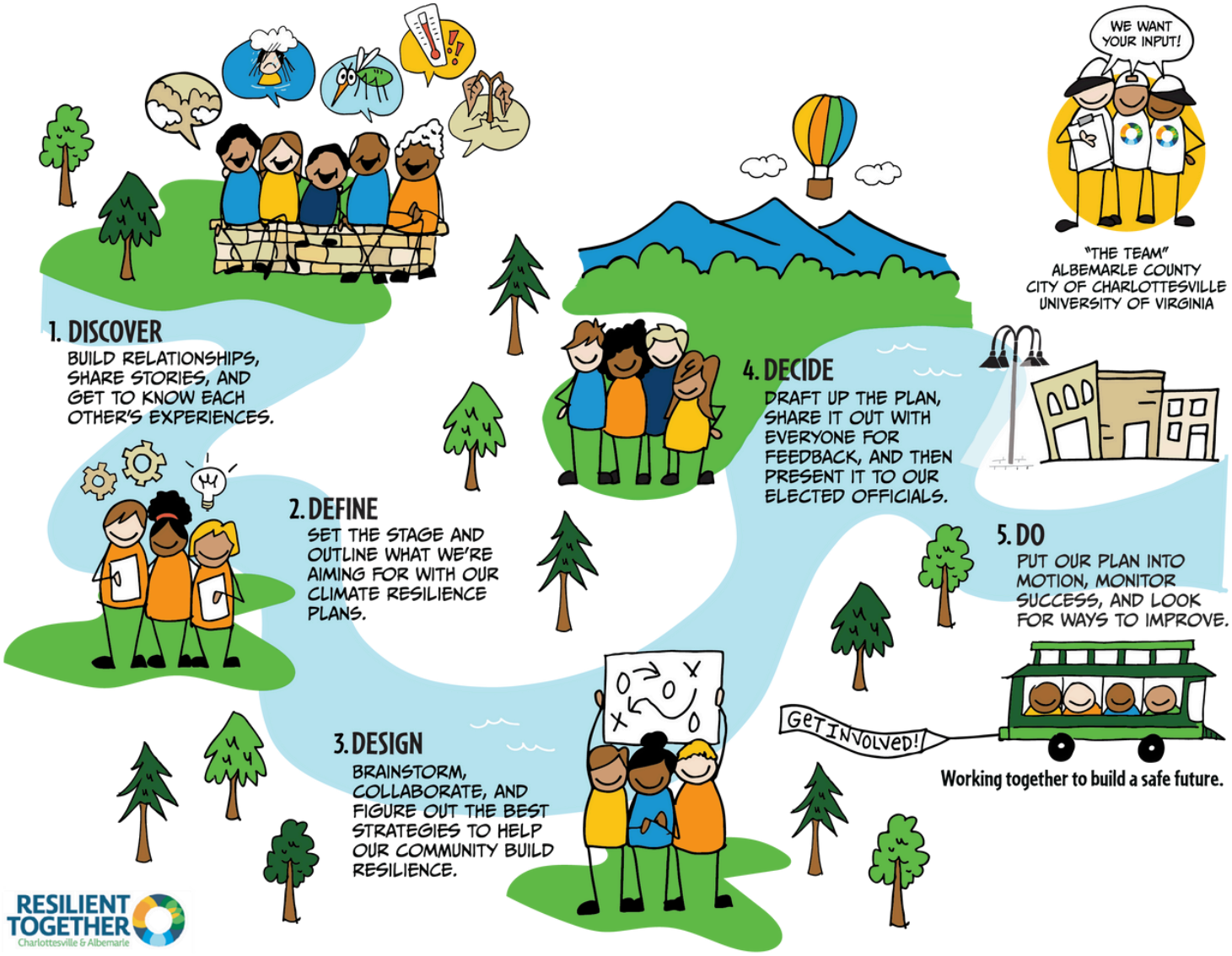
In June, we received a competitive Environmental Justice Government-to-Government (EJG2G) grant of just over $460,000 from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This grant enabled us to create the Climate Resilience Cohort, through which we will provide subgrants to 10 community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve disadvantaged community members. CBO grantees will help center the needs of our most vulnerable community members in the Resilient Together strategies. We are looking forward to our first workshop with the participant organizations this month.

Over the summer, we completed the Define phase, which included three steps: First, we identified themes from the information we gathered during the Discover phase. Second, we used these themes to draft guiding principles and long-term goals for Resilient Together, which will continue to be refined during next steps. Third, we researched over a thousand strategy options from around the country and curated a list of the most locally relevant for consideration in the Design phase (see Looking Ahead section). In the coming months, we will look to you and the community to help us identify and refine the best resilience strategies to pursue in the years ahead.

OUR PROCESS

Climate Protection Program and Community Engagement staff from the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and the University of Virginia have worked together to design a process that offers welcoming and inclusive participation opportunities for all members of our community.

This will include inclusive community engagement, consultation with partner organizations and subject-matter experts, and guidance from staff across all three organizations. The two local governments' Climate Programs will lead and facilitate the process.



WHAT WE HEARD

The following themes are distilled from what we heard and digested from the Charlottesville-Albemarle community during the Discover Phase of the Resilient Together project. This included workshops with staff from the County, City, UVA, and partner agencies, community engagement events, and research of climate resilience best practice. The themes also incorporate community engagement conducted during other recent planning projects like AC44 and Cville Plans Together.

Community Strengths

Our community has numerous strengths—cultural resources, natural ecosystems, historical significance, and engaged community members. There is significant institutional wealth and agency, though this has not always been used to the benefit of all. There is also significant personal financial wealth—including philanthropy—though this is not equitably distributed. Many people and communities in our area are already working to address multiple social, economic, and environmental challenges. We heard recurring interest in building on these strengths while addressing disparities.

Community Engagement and Communication

Most people we talked to were enthusiastic about the project and happy to hear that the City, County, and UVA are collaborating to address the impacts of climate change. Community members indicated a lack of awareness and a desire for enhanced communication and engagement related to government-led projects. There is a desire for this project to improve communication and make it easier for people to get involved.

Equity and Inclusion

The community understands that climate change will impact some community members more than others and that those who are already vulnerable will be disproportionately affected. There is a desire for the resilience plans and projects to center vulnerable community members, and for those community members to be consulted about their needs and wants.



Emergency Preparedness and Public Safety

People in the community understand that climate change will have an impact on public safety, especially during emergency events. There is a desire for coordination amongst the three entities during disaster events, and an appreciation that there is precedent for working together in this space.



Reliable Infrastructure

There are broad concerns about the strength of our infrastructure as climate driven risks increase, and a desire for the project to help ensure local systems stay reliable. People are especially concerned about the power, water, and food systems.



Healthy Local Ecosystems

People in our community care deeply about the natural environment and understand that we need not only to protect our local ecosystems (plants, animals, water, and soils) but also to work to expand and strengthen them. There is a strong desire to consider climate change as an integral part of development and long-term plans.

Public Health and Wellbeing

Community members expressed concern about the impacts of climate change on public health in general, and especially on individuals who are more exposed or vulnerable to extreme weather. Several specific concerns included access to healthcare, heat and air quality, and outdoor worker safety.



Economic Vitality

Preserving our area's economic vitality and expanding economic opportunity are important to the community. We heard from many community members a desire for more local job opportunities and more locally affordable housing.



Rural and Urban Interdependence

The rural and urban areas of our community have both distinct and connected needs. There is a feeling that this project must make sure to address the concerns of both areas equitably. There is also a desire for the project to build on systems of support and mutual aid that already serve the community.

PROJECT VISION

The Resilient Together project envisions a community that is strong, safe, and healthy in the face of the changing climate now and in the future.

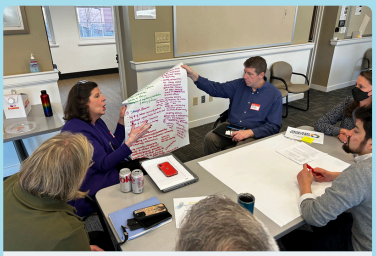
A Look Back: Community Engagement



Tabletop activity at the Open House

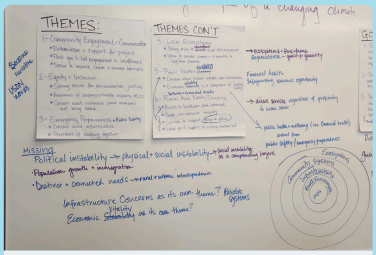

Activity at Community Day


Discussion at a Staff Workshop


Discussion at a Staff Workshop



Questionnaire at a Community Event



Project Team Work Session

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles are distilled from the themes we heard. These principles will apply not only to the development of resilience plans, but also to the implementation projects that follow.

GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a primary resilience strategy that will ultimately reduce the cost and difficulty of adaptation.

EQUITY: Resilient Together will ensure resilience strategies and implementation plans promote environmental justice and that the benefits are equitably distributed across the community.

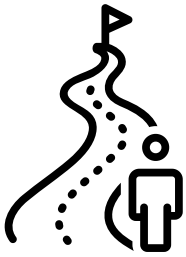
COMMUNICATION + COLLABORATION: Local climate adaptation and resilience work will grow and improve communication, partnerships, and collaboration across the community.

THRIVING COMMUNITY: Local climate adaptation and resilience work will prioritize strategies that have a positive impact on public health, local ecosystems, and economic vitality.

ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES: Resilience strategies will be actionable and lead to tangible, real-world results.

HEAL PEOPLE + PLANET: Resilience strategies will help heal people and planet.

LONG-TERM GOALS



These goals are also distilled from the themes we heard. They are intentionally broad and reflect big-picture outcomes of the Resilient Together work.

	Community members, businesses, and organizations are empowered to take part in building climate resilience within the community.
	The community has the tools and resources to anticipate and effectively adapt to climate change.
	Low-income and rural communities are included in climate action and resilience efforts.
	Infrastructure is capable of withstanding climate hazards and providing reliable service during emergencies.
	Collaboration and communication among people, community organizations, government entities, and educational institutions are improved and strengthened.
	Health and safety impacts related to climate hazards are reduced, particularly for vulnerable populations.
	Economic vitality is enhanced through effective climate resilience.

STRATEGY OPTIONS



We researched strategies from NOAA's U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit Options Database, curating a list of the most locally relevant options and comparing these to existing strategies in the regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, our localities' climate action plans, the comprehensive plans, and other local documents.

To help us select and refine the best resilience strategies to pursue in the years ahead, we will ask three questions during the Design phase engagement:

IMPACTS: In 10-20 years, what will have transformed?

MID-TERM OUTCOMES: In 10 years, what results will we have achieved from pursuing a given strategy?

STRATEGY OPTIONS: What types of strategies are most appropriate for our localities and will yield the desired outcomes and impacts?

LOOKING AHEAD

The objective of the Design Phase is to develop and refine strategies, projects, and programs that will meet the defined goals.

Our project team has defined initial strategies, outcomes, and impacts for staff and community members to respond to and build on. We will also invite new ideas to add to the strategy options. All design work will build on the foundation developed during the Discover and Define phases.

