



People on the Move in a Changing Climate

RECEIVING COMMUNITIES BRIEFING DOCUMENT

August 2024



PEOPLE
ON THE
MOVE IN A
CHANGING
CLIMATE



Background

This document is intended to help set the stage for the Fall 2024 People on the Move in a Changing Climate (PEMOCC) Receiving Communities workshop. It will be updated based on the presentations and conversations at the event. PEMOCC is a Sea Grant-led and National Science Foundation-funded project. The goal of PEMOCC is to identify research, policy, and extension/outreach needs and to increase collaborative research efforts to prepare communities for the impacts of climate change on human mobility or relocation needs. Five regional workshops were held to understand the major needs and goals of climate change driven relocation throughout the United States. In response to findings from those five workshops, PEMOCC is hosting a receiving communities workshop in Corvallis, OR to bring together researchers, practitioners, and interested parties working at the intersection of climate change and human mobility.

For the purposes of this workshop, we are using the following working definitions of a receiving community and climate-induced human mobility. These definitions will be built upon during the workshop and are not intended to be static.

What is a receiving community?

Based on synthesis from past PEMOCC workshops and multiple sources,* a receiving community is one that is anticipating or actually receiving an increase in population in response to weather, a climate hazard, or long-term trends in changing weather and climatic conditions. This increase could be in large numbers or in smaller “trickles” and could be long-term or short-term increases. Ideally these communities should be in a location of reduced climate risk, such as inland from coastal flooding, however, receiving communities may also face climate vulnerabilities.

What is climate-induced human mobility?

The relocation of people due to climate change. This movement can be a voluntary choice or forced due to climate associated disasters. Relocation may be temporary or long-term. Relocation can be affected by many factors, including but not limited to acute disasters, long-term hazards, familial connections, and employment, and may be directly or indirectly influenced by climate-related considerations.

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*This layout was created
using a template generated
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***see references**

Background (*continued*)

Which communities are likely to receive climate-driven migrants?

It has been hypothesized that areas with low (perceived) future climate risk and access to fresh water are likely to receive the highest influx of people. The Receiving Geography Guide (figure below), published a list of cities lowest in climate risk that may experience the largest influx.

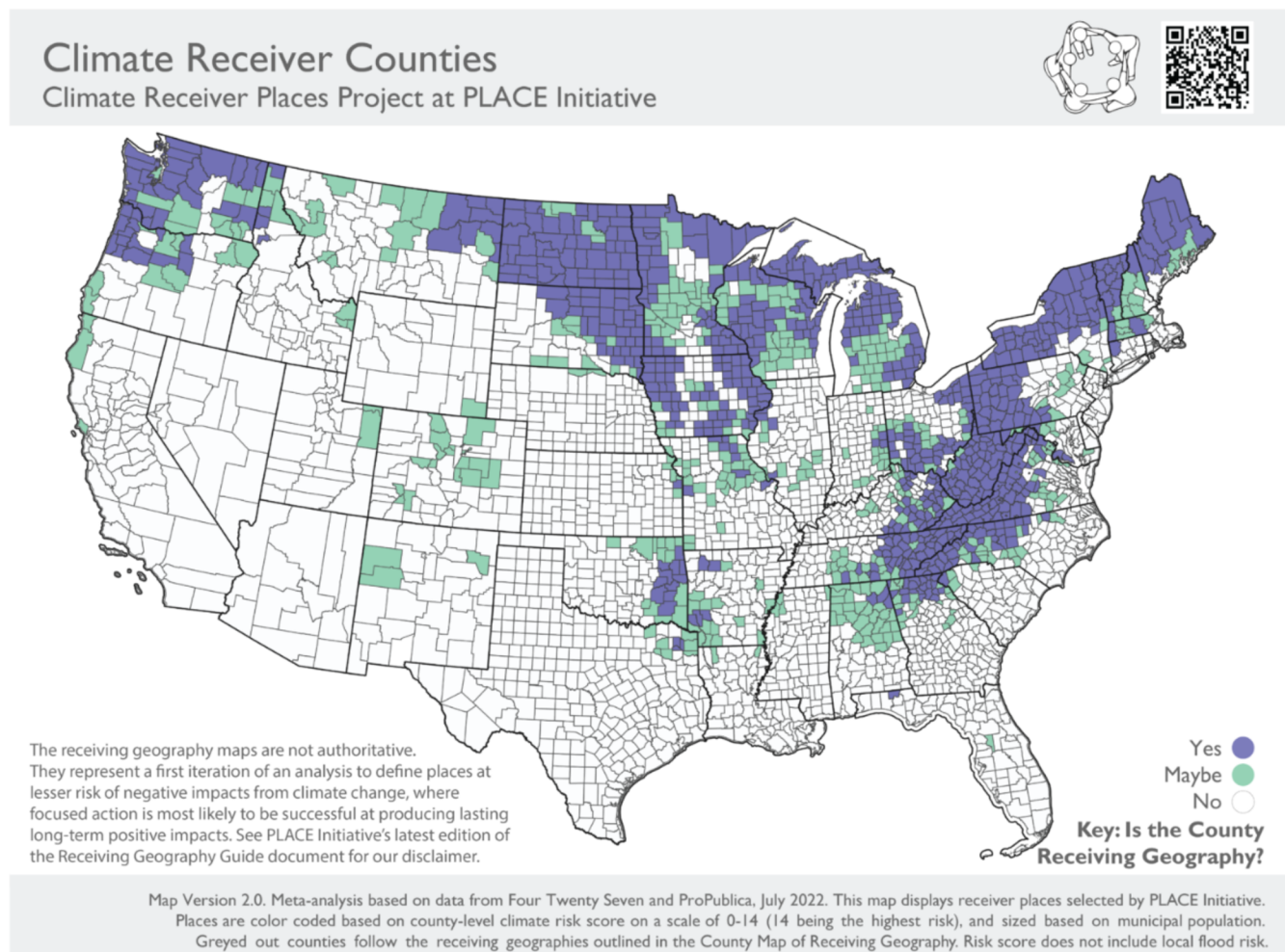


Image Above:

Developed by PLACE Initiative, the above image is included in the Receiving Geography Guide. The document is intended to be a tool for local governments and communities who may receive an influx of people as a result of climate change.

Planning for climate-driven mobility: what receiving communities could expect

When an influx of people occurs in any municipality, governments, communities, and people must adapt to this change. Otherwise, resource allocations may shift to the detriment of some groups and cultural expectations may differ as new people move in. Cities and countries will be forced to face reduced capacity of or partition access to services such as healthcare and public utilities. In addition to planning to accommodate migrants, it is also necessary to provide housing assistance programs that are equitably developed. This means that policymakers and community members must work collaboratively to ensure a smooth integration of new community members.

Timing of the influx matters. Planning can only work when communities know when and how many people are coming, as well as the demographic characteristics of the new population. In some cases, this influx can occur before planning occurs.

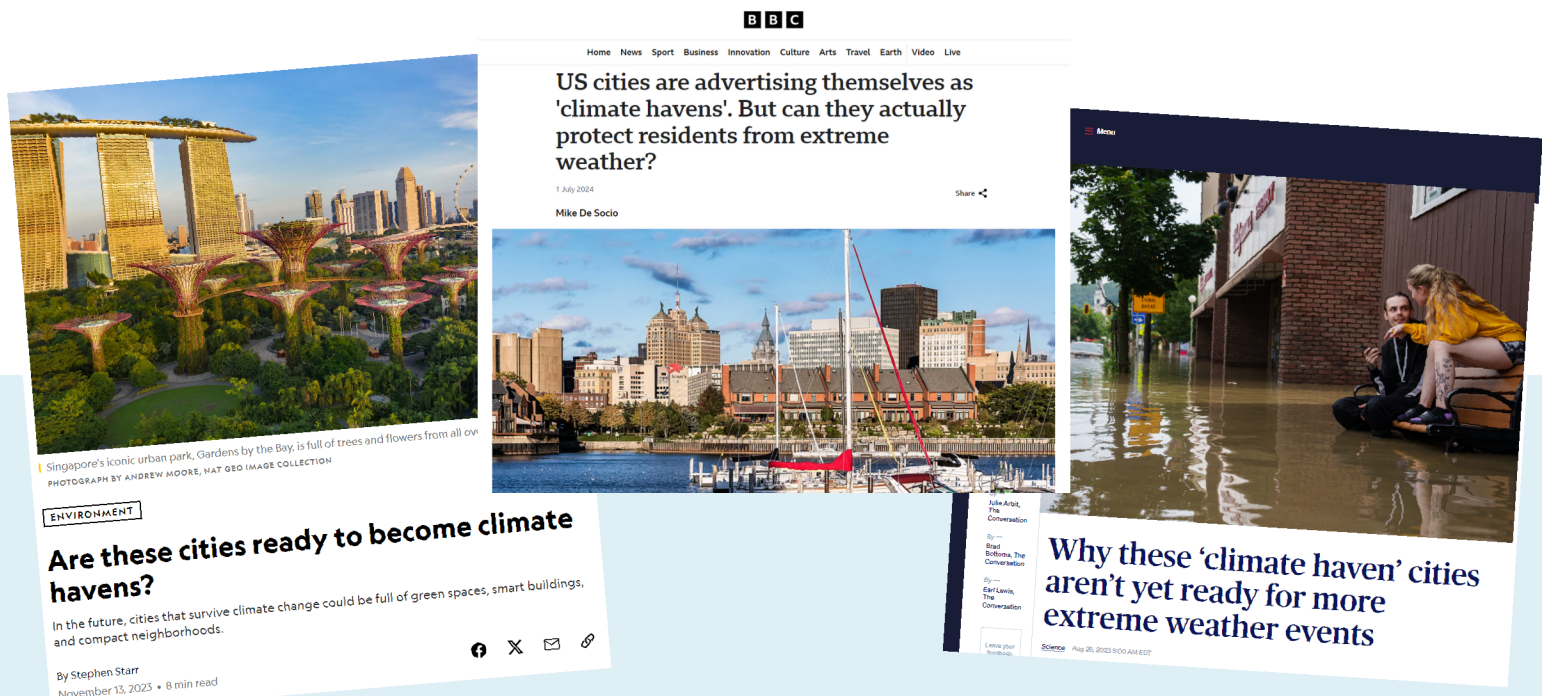
Actions to consider:

To accommodate people who are impacted by weather and climate, it will be critical to plan, when possible, for future changes by:

- Researching and gathering data on who is moving and why.
- Understanding which areas will receive the largest influx of people.
- Leveraging current funding opportunities and seeking out new sources to support housing accommodation and infrastructure (transportation, water, wastewater, education, labor, etc.).
- Centering equity by engaging with community members and co-creating solutions.
- Facilitating connections and listening sessions between incoming and current residents.

Key Needs to Address

- Essential industries will feel an increased burden in receiving communities. Therefore, it is critical to understand how more efficient receiving community programs can support an influx of people. Energy, agriculture, transportation, health, education, and other incredibly necessary public service industries are essential to providing for existing and incoming residents. Without planning and preparation for the millions of migrants that will move domestically within the United States, there is potential for these industries to struggle to adapt to shifting conditions, affecting migrants and current residents' state of living.
- Research and case-studies are needed to learn how to successfully address the needs of people that move in response to climate change-driven disasters, while centering equity. It will be important to learn from available case studies to understand strengths and weaknesses of past instances of significant human mobility, including instances of disaster-driven or climate-driven mobility as well as large development projects associated with climate-driven industries. Additionally, case studies are needed in order to determine unforeseen impacts on receiving communities. For example, climate migration-induced gentrification and decreased accessibility to low income housing. To combat this, city plans that include loans with low interest rates and higher minimum salaries can improve struggles for those being pressured to move due to rising housing and living costs. These play an important role in centering equity, with the knowledge that vulnerable populations do not always have the resources that are needed to adapt or move suddenly.



Summary of Insights from Past Workshops

Great Lakes Region:

Climate justice should be centered during planning efforts otherwise climate migration will exacerbate existing inequities. Storytelling will be an effective mode to share lessons learned and highlight the need for resilient solutions. Planning offices should consider multiple possible future states with different population likelihoods. There is a strong need for data to reinforce spatial projections and the timing of relocation, including the number of potential new residents. Modeling efforts of future scenarios offer uncertainties and may make it harder for planners to act. Without adequate planning, there will be a disproportionate impact on large and small communities' burdens, with differing access to resources and levels of capacity. The Great Lakes regional meeting emphasized the role of data in planning for climate migration and the importance of understanding existing social and economic burdens to better adapt to future community changes and enhance equity in access to resources.

Northeast and Mid-Atlantic:

Receiving communities will need to identify who is moving and plan for changes across cultural and economic factors. It is important to recognize that across receiving and migrating communities, wealth is a strong indicator of the ability to move. There could be both positive (economic boosts) and negative effects (exacerbated gentrification) on receiving communities. Furthermore, migration timing could determine who is most likely to move. Initial movers may have increased access to resources and settle in affluent communities, while later movers may have been displaced and have lower access to resources. It will be integral for communities to facilitate social integration and acceptance in new community dynamics to ensure they are successful. This could be achieved through storytelling and information sharing. A key need emphasized during the regional meeting was the creation of networks and communities of practice that can facilitate information exchange.

Southwest:

Some municipalities will see the label of “receiving community” as a positive economic opportunity, while others that already experience high migration may not view it optimistically. Care should be taken to provide resources to new and existing residents since addressing the needs of both will facilitate a successful transition. Support for receiving communities is needed at both the federal and local levels. This support could come in the form of national data that can predict trends in movement, federal grant opportunities, or local policy that drives land use planning. Overall, the Southwest regional meeting highlighted the role that communication and equity considerations will play in facilitating successful adaptation to climate change.

Summary of Insights from Past Workshops (*continued*)

Southeast, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico:

Collaboration, building relationships and trust in communities, and utilizing storytelling will be key to how practitioners can engage people. Workshop discussions highlighted the ways that PEMOCC can assist: expanding networks by building relationships with extension, synthesizing information on resources for climate-induced mobility, and advocating for funding accessibility for community-led projects. The final breakout discussions ended with attendee commitments to encourage more equitable planning around human mobility as a result of climate change. Commitments included creating a safe space for people to feel included in conversations, meet people where they are, and promote workplace diversity.

The Greater Pacific:

The Pacific is a very dynamic region that is home to people who live a plethora of different lifestyles and come from a diversity of backgrounds. This workshop sought to highlight the uniqueness of islanded places, including Alaska, as many rural communities there are not connected by roads. These islanded places and rural communities are distant from the rest of the continental United States and thus do not have the same level of data and assistance available for resiliency planning. Workshop discussions focused on climate resilience & adaptation solutions to increase community well-being with an emphasis on underserved communities in Alaska, Hawaii, and the Mariana Islands. Hawai'i, other U.S. islands in the Pacific, and Alaska are home to large Indigenous populations, including Native Hawaiians, Chomorro, and Alaska Natives. These communities often sit at the periphery of wealthy urban centers and federal infrastructure, such as military bases and lands controlled by federal agencies. Thus, conversations at the workshop centered on equity with the intent to undergo climate adaptation with cultural respect in mind. Members of Indigenous and rural communities need more voices in decision making, especially elder and youth voices. These communities often have deep cultural and spiritual ties to the land on which they live and it is this reason that people continue to live in locations where they have generational connections to place.

Regional Needs Identification

In this section, we summarize the **RESEARCH**, **POLICY**, **PLANNING**, and **OUTREACH AND EDUCATION** needs identified during the regional workshops.

RESEARCH NEEDS:

- ◆ To meet people where they are and facilitate participatory research
- ◆ Improved estimates of how many people will move and when; cities need to have this information to be able to plan
- ◆ Community-driven research studies that are directly related to and benefit a specific community's needs in identifying potential population changes
- ◆ Case studies and cost-benefit analysis
- ◆ To identify how climate change is linked with other factors influencing mobility
- ◆ Studies that follow up with communities and families that have taken part in buyout programs
- ◆ To understand the mechanisms behind integration and success in people who have relocated
- ◆ To take a multidimensional approach to understanding not only why people move and their motivations around responding to hazards, but also underlying social, economic, political, and regional issues
- ◆ Determine how social capital plays into the decision-making process of moving
- ◆ National-level research that projects trends in migration and is publicly available
- ◆ Systems perspectives research that takes into account historical movement, current patterns, and future trends in extreme weather or inundation
- ◆ Defined terms for receiving communities in academia
- ◆ Studies that use existing data (infrastructure capacity, social networks, level of climate risk etc.) to rank the suitability of receiving communities

Needs Identification (*continued*)

POLICY NEEDS

- ◆ Support sustainable growth, increased capacity to be able to work on zoning issues and planning
- ◆ Regional policy coordination that increases land ownership diversification and equity in lower income communities
- ◆ Disincentivizing new development that contributes to urban sprawl
- ◆ National-level climate policy
- ◆ Inclusion of climate change-induced migration and mobility in refugee policy and definitions
- ◆ Local government funding for receiving communities to offer more social support and critical infrastructure
- ◆ Increase diversity and youth engagement in policy discussions, those experiencing climate change impacts most strongly should be involved in policy creation
- ◆ Law that reduces exclusionary zoning to prevent gentrification and segregation
- ◆ Clearly defined policies that outline the length of relocation efforts and the identification of ideal future locations to move to

Needs Identification (*continued*)

PLANNING NEEDS

- ◆ Regional coordination to prevent urban sprawl and promote work across silos in city and local government
- ◆ Increased capacity in smaller cities for both staff and resources to be proactive
- ◆ Guides for planning best practices that include community-developed planning examples
- ◆ Look at sending and receiving communities together and identify opportunities to collaborate
- ◆ Equitable city planning to minimize disproportionate burden on costs
- ◆ Develop detailed resilience projects with key collaborators that are ready to be implemented when funding becomes available
- ◆ Leverage existing planning documents to include long-range goals for resilience and receiving communities
- ◆ Preparation planning for incoming people after extreme weather events
- ◆ Infrastructure design should take into consideration shifts in populations
- ◆ Increased affordable housing that takes into account existing social structures and limits possible future gentrification
- ◆ Include local and indigenous leaders in the planning process for adapting in place or relocation. Especially elder and youth voices. Cultural values and practices are imperative for social cohesion

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION NEEDS:

- ◆ Listening sessions with communities about climate change and its impacts that also work towards future solutions
- ◆ Regional networks centered around climate change and human mobility that facilitate information sharing
- ◆ Ethical guidelines for conducting outreach in communities impacted by climate change
- ◆ Tools and best practices materials that can be distributed to those who plan to move
- ◆ Consistency in language use around climate-induced human mobility
- ◆ Aspirational and direct language to balance with a sense of urgency that can be acted on
- ◆ Community-driven projects that address specific issues and more social scientists to act as resilience practitioners that can help guide planning and mobility for resilience
- ◆ To recognize the connection people have with their home and community, facilitate maintaining that connection after they leave, and provide resources for finding or growing new connections
- ◆ Use both qualitative and quantitative data to tell stories about people that have been affected by climate change

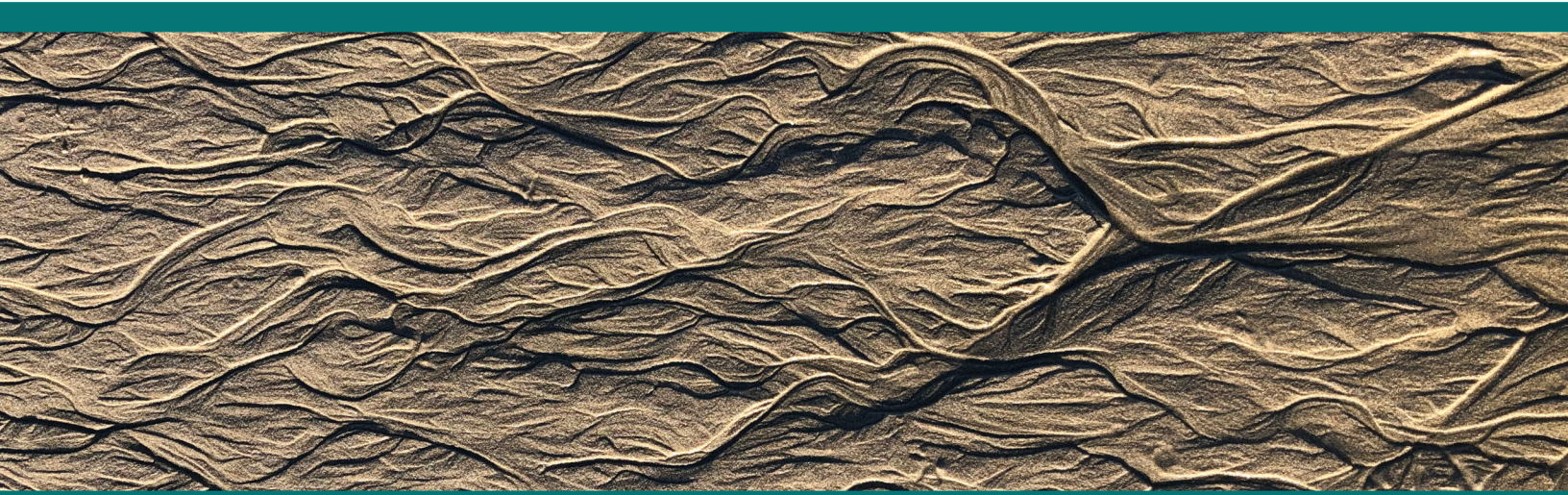
Summary

It is imperative to provide receiving communities with planning ideas and concepts to equitably accommodate human mobility into towns and cities. Understanding how communities adjust to an influx of people and preventing climate-related gentrification is essential. There is a need for policy options for local, state, and federal governments to consider to support relocation efforts. There is also a need for equitable grant opportunities for climate mobility both within the government and in non-governmental organizations. Further research is needed to identify how communities are already receiving climate migrants and how people have been affected by moving from their old communities into a new one. The goal of PEMOCC and workshops such as these are to gather information that will make it easier for cities, practitioners, and communities to react to climate change and the impact it has on human mobility. This document serves only as a starting point in the conversation around receiving communities and will benefit from continued input and perspectives.



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