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## Easton plan seeks bold, yet practical approaches to the challenge of climate change

Jeff Ward

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Easton's **climate plan** tackles a big issue, but with a practical approach.

"This is a starting point for us to take more committed action," said Kate Semmens, science director of the Nurture Nature Center in Easton. "This is a call to everyone within the city, not just the municipal leaders, to take a hand in making Easton a vision of resilience and make it a leader."

The plan adopted by City Council sets some big goals: Easton will cut electricity use in

buildings 20% by 2030, just a few years away, and use 100% renewable energy. Other goals for 2030 include ensuring that a store selling fresh produce is available within a 15-minute walk of every resident. Adding a grocery store downtown has proven difficult, despite booming development near Centre Square.

The goals become more ambitious over time. By 2050, the plan seeks entirely carbon-free public transportation, 80% of light-duty vehicles will be electric and 90% of city buildings will have completed energy-efficient improvements.

The Nurture Nature Center, Lafayette College, and others put the plan together. Converting it into action is a challenge, even in a city where the effects of climate change could be severe. The Delaware and Lehigh rivers meet in Easton. When the Delaware River rises, the Lehigh River and Bushkill Creek back up and cause floods. During a recent storm, the falls where the Lehigh enters the Delaware disappeared as water rose.

Semmens said the plan will be reviewed every few years.

"There are things you can do now, but there are things you can do 10, 20 years from now," she said. The plan may change as new technology becomes available.

Semmens said the plan is a practical start, not a wish list.

"Some things are easy to do," she said, such as composting, using LED light bulbs, and planting vegetation along waterways. "They're not hard, pie-in-the-sky things. Easton is already taking some steps" to fend off climate change, which could lead to increased flooding and extreme heat.

Semmens said climate change could result in more frequent flooding and extreme heat. Even community gardens and green spaces can play a role, she said.

The term "resilience" appears in various forms eight times in the plan. The term is catching on in climate plans.

In this case, "resilience" means withstanding challenges, Semmens said.

"We really see it as the ability to adapt to circumstances, to come out better than before,"

Semmens said. "There are a lot of negative impacts that are probably coming our way." The nature center has several programs based on the theme of resilience.

The plan goes beyond climate science to comment on the need for affordable transportation, food and energy-efficient housing. That reflects the need for all residents to be involved, Semmens said, and how climate change will reach into all facets of life.

"These are smart choices, not just for climate change but for us in general, for our health, our economy, our social well-being," Semmens said.

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WFMZ.com Reporter