

Resilience Hubs: an Overview

By Kayla Seaforth

Communities are experiencing climate related disasters, needs and hardships more frequently, and those with fewer resources are often the ones who are disproportionately impacted. A potential step toward community self-reliance during these times is the creation of resilience hubs: places, networks and services that can support communities in difficult times. This represents a shift from responsive, single need focused, and often temporary services like cooling or warming shelters to permanent, well resourced hubs that can provide real time support before, during and after disasters occur or when needs arise within a community. Resilience hubs are being talked about in a number of ways, and they can be physical locations, or non-physical networks of services that can support people when disasters hit.

This year, Wallowa County in Oregon was awarded funding from the Oregon Department of Energy to develop plans for several resilience hubs in different cities (Kalez, 2022). Federal funding is also being directed toward building community resilience to climate change; funding for FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program more than doubled this year (White House Staff, 2022). Other funding programs include Congress' **Community Funding Program** and the Department of Energy's **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program**, both of which are open to state, local, and tribal governments. Regionally, Washington State has established funding for a "solar plus storage for resilient communities program" in the state's supplemental operating

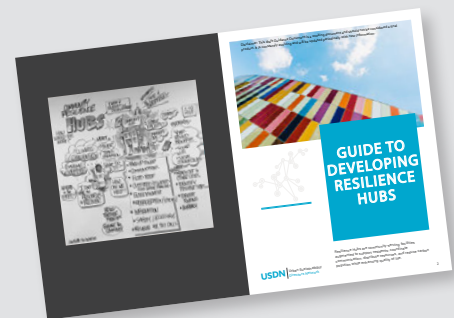
budget. The program is currently under development, according to the Department of Commerce [website](#). In addition to funding across Oregon provided by the Oregon Department of Energy, the city of Portland is offering funding for nonprofits and volunteer based organizations to support projects like resilience hubs through their **2022 Community Resilience and Capacity Building Grant**. In other states, energy utilities are also stepping up to fund this work. Additionally, the Biden-Harris administration has launched a [website](#) to guide community resilience planning efforts that connects users with reputable sources for information on climate related hazards, long term exposure projections and federal funding sources. It seems that funders, including the federal government, are responding to the need for community support as we experience the effects of climate change.

The **Urban Sustainability Directors Network** (USDN) conceptualizes resilience hubs operating across five

foundational areas: services and programming, communications, buildings and landscapes, power, and operations. They also define different modes as the needs of the community change, which they break down into everyday, disruption and recovery modes. This allows hubs to function year round and become a trusted fixture of a community, and then move into specialized services should a major upheaval like a natural disaster, pandemic or other event occur, and continue to support residents with services through the recovery phase. They also offer a rating system depending on what features a resilience hub has to define baseline, optimal, and ideal operating states. This framework allows hubs to scale according to their needs and resources. USDN emphasizes that hubs operating at a baseline level can provide tremendous community support, and this framework allows continual evolution over time to respond to changing needs (Baja, 2019).

Interested in Learning More?

The Urban Sustainability Directors Network has created the in-depth **Guide to Developing Resilience Hubs**, which outlines why a hub may be needed and detailed guidance for getting started.



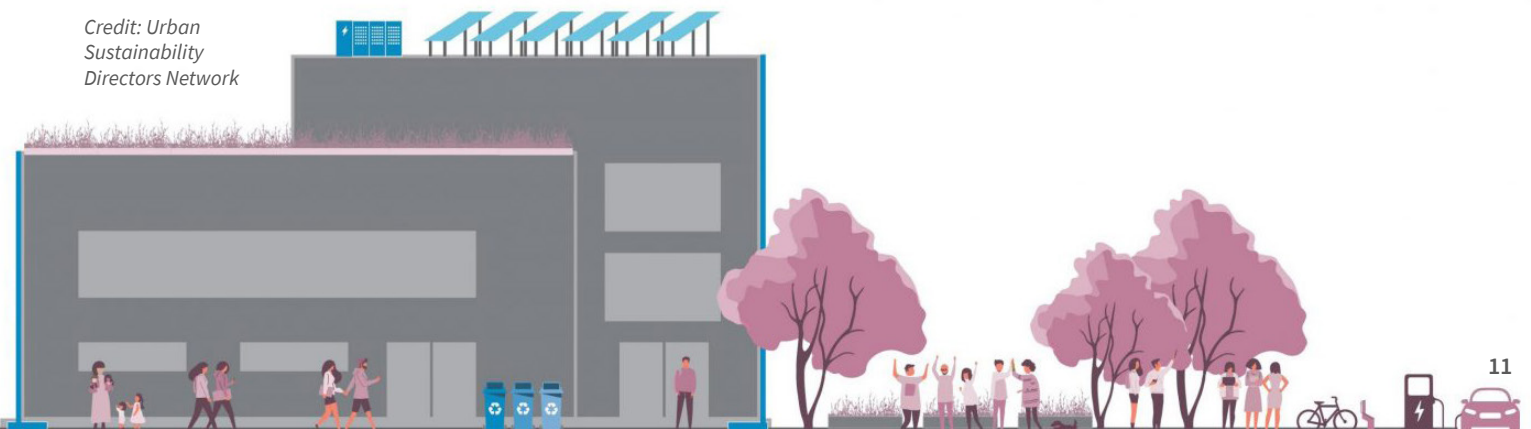
Physical Resilience Hub Elements

Services and Programming	Communications	Buildings and Landscapes	Power	Operations
Youth education and enrichment programming	Reliable primary and back-up communications systems	Low impact/sustainable design	Use of renewable energy sources	Staffed to operate in everyday, disruption, and recovery modes
Skills share network	Multi-lingual materials and translation services	Located in an area unlikely to be impacted by natural disasters (i.e. out of floodplain, out of tsunami impact area, away from Wildland Urban Interface)	Power redundancy/back-up systems	External support in place for functions beyond center capacity
Childcare	Consistent and relevant communication with community	Kitchen/food storage	Electric vehicle charging	Tied into larger network for disruption response needs (i.e. local, state and federal emergency managers, voluntary networks, medical facilities, etc.)
Counseling	Disaster preparedness community planning/communications	Clean water		ADA+ compliance
Financial literacy/vocational readiness	Radio broadcast	Gardens		
Sheltering facilities		Recreation areas		

Non-Physical or Decentralized Resilience Hub Elements

Services and Programming	Communications	Buildings and Landscapes (pre-existing services)	Power	Operations
Scientific/Environmental assessment, monitoring and modeling	Emergency warning networks	Storm shelters	Network of residential/commercial solar with storage capacity, connected to grid	Independent organizations staffed according to resources
Emergency medicine	Neighborhood groups/networks	Temporary housing	Utility providers	Shared disruption response plan with clear roles and responsibilities
Childcare	Local/state emergency operations centers or emergency departments	Food pantries/kitchens/gardens	Network of backup generators	Orgs lend support to one another to fill gaps in knowledge, resources, etc. (niche model)
Food distribution		Parks and natural areas		
Community skill building				

Credit: Urban Sustainability Directors Network



There are benefits to both physical and decentralized resilience hubs, and in practice it is likely both will be at play during times of community strain. These projects can range from informal support networks to million dollar facilities, depending on the desires and resources of a community. Above all community services should be co-created by those they are meant to serve, regardless of scale. Investing in relationships with community members and building resilience hubs that support their needs should be the driving force for creating resilience hubs (Baja, 2018).

While the frameworks discussed here may offer visions of what community resilience can look like, this is not a new concept. Indigenous communities around the world have long held a community oriented mindset and have designed cultures of community care across generations and through different eras of colonization. Black communities in the United States have organized around community resilience since the period when this country sanctioned slavery. Refugees have gathered together to create supportive networks as they've had to flee violence and oppression in their home countries. The idea of resilience is old, even ancient, and is often invoked in response to systemic violence and

oppression. In designing community networks and support services, we should be investigating the source of the violence and organizing to restructure the systems that require certain communities to be continuously resilient whenever possible.

Works Cited:

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Who Is At the Table Matters

Excerpts from BEF's trauma informed care training modules:

Depending on where resources come from, there may be unequal distribution and access to services, and thanks to structural inequity, those who may need help the most are the most likely to be discriminated against. For example, churches and faith based organizations are often hubs of support following natural disasters, however the position of some religious organizations does not support LGBTQIA+ rights and bars LGBTQIA+ folks from accessing their services. While many religious organization do offer inclusive services, past trauma with religious institutions can make members of the LGBTQIA+ community feel unsafe seeking services from these organizations despite the quality of the support. Federal aid is often available to individuals who have survived disasters, however, despite policies that might say otherwise, undocumented folks tend to be hesitant sharing information with government organizations due to a history of weaponization of this information, and are therefore cut off from the funds that could help them recover financially from disaster.

A Note on Resilience From Trauma Informed Care Teachings

When talking about individual, collective, intergenerational or historical trauma, it is important to remember that healing and reducing the impacts of trauma is possible on both the personal and collective scales. In Trauma Informed Care curriculums, Resilience is frequently talked about in relationship to trauma. Resilience is the ability for an individual or community to return to a state of being healthy and hopeful after emotionally disturbing things happen. Humans are naturally resilient and resilience on its own is not a bad quality or attribute.

But we need to be careful of how and why we focus on resilience. It's important that we're cognizant about which individuals or communities are being asked to be resilient over and over again in the face of systems that target them based on the identities they hold. Resilience is not the solution for systems of oppression. Changing or dismantling the system that target certain groups is. Language around resilience often puts the emphasis and praise on an individual's ability bounce back in the face of adversity or trauma, rather than focusing on changing the systems that force individuals and communities to be resilient over and over again.

A lot of dialogue around resilience can be disempowering and overly burden targeted groups to simply be more resilient. It's important to reflect on what power dynamics are at play when discourse around resilience comes up. We want to emphasize the differences between resilience and resistance and offer resistance as another way to think about overcoming the impacts of trauma.

For example, imagine a forest ecosystem that has been repeatedly burned by wildfires. While wildfires have always been present in that ecosystem, climate change is exacerbating the frequency and intensity of the fires. We may be in awe of how seemingly resilient the forest is, as we see plants and new growth come back to the forest in the years following the fires. But we don't just rely on the resilience of the forest to prevent fires in the future. We commit to work around fuels reduction and thinning, and seek to address the root causes of our changing climate. Rather than merely admire the strength and resilience of the forest, we work to be accomplices to the forest's natural resilience by working to resist the harm being done to the forest at the systems level.

To learn more about trauma informed care and resilience, click [here](#).