

**Many Paths:  
Climate Change: Truth or Consequences  
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(Authors' note: October's live podcast, held at Knox County Brewing Co. went well; find it on Math Paths Galesburg's Facebook page. Our next one is scheduled for November 14th, 6-8 PM.)

We believe the question of climate change needs to be addressed on a local-city level. Our national leaders have failed us. It is time for us to start paving a path to a safer, more sustainable future for all of us. Locally. Together.

Oh, we can hear you thinking: What can we do? We are just a small, west-central Illinois town of 30,000. Well, we have heard and researched several ways for us to start. Some just require an attitude adjustment. Others require demonstrable action. Let's take a look.

First, we need a willingness by everyone, to participate in choosing our leaders. The last municipal election, out of 18,254 eligible voters, 1,445 voted. That's 7.9%. That's how many people chose our new council members. We need a mayor and council willing to join U.S. Conference of Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement. (Has anyone asked them to?) This would be a start to addressing this challenge. It would start a critical conversation. Local action can definitely benefit from support from leadership.

Second, since electing people is not enough, we need these elected people (our neighbors) to include us in decisions regarding the climate before they have already been decided. Too often we are asked our opinion and ideas after a decision has already been made. Yet, on the same token, we too have to be more demanding of them. We need to show up and speak our minds. Transparency is a cornerstone of a thriving democracy. But, input from the public is required too.

Third, our town should be a place that makes us proud. We should not be apologetic or embarrassed by our leadership, how the town looks, or left with a depressed, hopeless attitude. We need to emphasize public places. Parks are areas where we can sit and talk. Areas that are inviting and bring us together. Green areas are preferred, not all concrete. Rotary Park is a great example of things done right. The new downtown plaza remains to be seen but offers some possibilities given its central location.

Fourth, the actions required to meet the challenges of climate change comes in many sizes and shapes, but they start with an attitude adjustment. They don't deny what is happening. They don't pawn off climate change as a naturally occurring event. No one but ourselves is going to correct this problem. Relying on the corporate world and national politics to solve this issue will not do. Electing the right local people, demanding that local businesses and multinational corporations start addressing the problem, and living as best you can represent effective steps. These efforts require a positive attitude though.

Fifth, as we learned at our live podcast (see Many Paths Galesburg on Facebook), there are concrete things that can help. We can expand our use of renewable energy sources—such as wind and solar. We can invest in sustainable agriculture which include privileging ecological solutions, rather than industrial methods. We can plant tree canopies in our community which will have many secondary benefits (more fruit, bees, more birds, and happier more sociable neighborhoods). We can work on all of these things at the city, church, school, or park level. Opportunities for cooperative efforts abound. Trees4Galesburg, a new non-profit in Galesburg, is but one such example; did you know they recently planted a bunch of trees?

In his essay in *State of the World, 2013*, Kim Stanley Robinson concludes: "We can see our present danger, and we can also see our future potential; stable human population of some 7-9 billion, living cleanly and well on a health biosphere, sharing Earth with the rest of the creatures who rely on it. This

isn't just a dream but a responsibility, a project. And things we can do now to start on this project are all around us, waiting to be taken up and lived."