

My UCLA colleague Alex Hall has released a [high quality micro-geography report](#) highlighting within Los Angeles variation in heat wave risk in the medium term future. I salute his efforts. This type of research is exactly what I expect more climate scientists to deliver namely high quality information that is correlated with what Mother Nature will actually do in the future. Now that we are “armed” with this information, how does this new news affect the law, public policy and individual choices by self interested households and profit seeking firms? If you can answer these questions, then you have a start to understanding how we will adapt to climate change. As folks know, I’m an optimist about our ability (via capitalism) to cope with new emerging threats. You can read the short version of my [Climatopolis logic here](#). If it is going to be very hot in LA and other cities, then firms who can provide products to keep people cool (air conditioning, better architecture) will have new market opportunities. Individuals who want to stay cool in our hotter future will change their time use to minimize their exposure to peak heat. Population density in extreme heat places may decline (but Phoenix does have millions of people there right now — how do they cope? — the people of LA will have to learn from their experiences).

Given that this is a legal blog, let’s talk about the law. Environmental lawyers should start to work on how the legal code will need to be changed to help us adapt to climate change. One obvious example is local land use zoning. If more land near the Pacific Ocean could be zoned for multi-family housing then millions of people could live in the “LA area” while not being exposed to the high heat that Alex Hall predicts. Returning to a theme in Glaeser and Gyourko’s work, local land regulation has serious consequences (they focused on affordability but here I’m focused on climate change adaptation). This merits more academic work and more activism by environmental lawyers.