

THE UNDERWATER TOOL KIT



Dear friend,

Thank you for wanting to help your community prepare for a future with rising seas. Living in Miami where we are ground zero for the impacts of the climate crisis, I felt the need to create a city-wide project that would not only raise awareness about our collective vulnerability, but also empower residents into action. Beginning as the *Underwater Homeowners Association* in 2018, the initiative has now evolved into *The Underwater* and is something that can be replicated in any coastal community.

Use the tool kit that we've developed here to help your friends and neighbors discover their home's elevation above sea level. By having people understand their personal connection to the problem and the role they can have in solving it, we create an opportunity for further engagement, collaboration, and ultimately solutions. Together, I believe we can mobilize our communities around climate justice and build a thriving future for all of us.

Please document everything you do and remember to tag us on social media (@cortadafoundation) so we can share all of your great work.

For people and the planet,
Xavier Cortada

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A SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART PROJECT BY XAVIER CORTADA

Below you will find the steps to implementing *The Underwater* project where you live. Consider these to be guidelines (not strict instructions) and feel free to be creative in how you bring this project to life. [Click here](#) for more on how and why we've done it.

STEP 1: CREATE YOUR UNDERWATER MARKER

How will you create your elevation-marked yard sign?

You need to start by figuring out your home's elevation above sea level. There are two websites we use depending on if you are located within or outside of the United States:

- United States of America
 - Visit our app at www.miamimedia.org/elevate
 - Type in the address of your home or desired location
 - Click the correct address from the drop-down menu
 - You will see the estimated elevation displayed below the map
- International
 - Visit the "FreeMapTools" elevation finder:
www.freemaptools.com/elevation-finder.htm
 - Zoom and pan the map to find your home or desired location
 - Click on the map to place a marker
 - You will see the estimated elevation displayed below the map

Once you know your elevation, you can create your Underwater Marker:

- Find an old political or "for sale" yard sign and reuse it
- Paint it completely white, the color of Antarctic glaciers, and let dry
- Paint your elevation number on the white sign with a blue squiggly line beneath it to represent the rising seas
- Place the sign in your front yard, take a picture, and post it on social media

~ Helpful Hint ~

When posting your picture online, include your area code in the project's hashtag. In Miami, we use #Underwater305. Make sure to also tag @cortadafoundation!

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STEP 2: FIND YOUR PEOPLE

Who will you join forces with to grow this project?

You need to find a group of people, a core of volunteers, that you are going to partner with to make this happen. These are the people who will help you organize sign-making events, generate media attention, and work with you on all of the logistics.

It's also important to look for institutional support, when possible, to expand the reach of the project. Since 2018, we've been able to engage thousands of people by working with local schools, universities, and municipalities.

Here are some questions to help you think about who may want to join you in this effort:

- Do you have any friends, family or neighbors who are similarly concerned/share your interest?
- Are you involved with an advocacy or environmental group?
- Do you know of any local institutions (civic, community, educational, faith, nonprofit organizations) that may share your concern/interest?



~ Helpful Hint ~

As you start to find your people, make sure they have a sense of ownership over the project by providing clear responsibilities, objectives, and goals.

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STEP 3: UTILIZE THE UNDERWATER INTEL

What can you learn and teach others?

Education is vital to all advocacy and conservation. To this end, we have curated an online resource hub - the [Underwater Intel](#) - that contains a selection of videos, books, podcasts, and more for anyone who wants to dive deeper in their climate education. If you find something that you think a friend would be interested in, make sure to share it with them!

PERSONAL THEORY OF CHANGE

- Your personal theory of change is the way you choose to contribute to the fight against the climate crisis. As you explore the Intel, consider your skills, passions and aspirations and how you might be able to equip them in pursuit of a liveable future for all.
- To assist you in this exploration, all of the resources have been broken down into the following five categories:
 - [Art, culture & media](#)
 - [Justice, law & policy](#)
 - [Health, wellness & diet](#)
 - [Business, energy & technology](#)
 - [Science, nature & conservation](#)

As you look through the Underwater Intel, you'll be introduced to an array of topics connected to climate change, find examples of leaders doing inspirational work, and learn about nonprofit organizations that are committed to equity, health and justice.

~ Helpful Hint ~

The organizations that we've highlighted are Miami-based, so we encourage you to create a similar list for wherever you live!

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STEP 4: CATALYZE CLIMATE ACTION

How can you spark real action in your community?

Once you've created an installation that has dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of Underwater Markers across your town, you may want to channel the newfound enthusiasm into community meetings, political advocacy, or volunteer opportunities.

In 2018, we began monthly "Underwater HOA" meetings where we convened neighbors and brought in relevant scientists, experts and practitioners to teach us and help us plan for a future with rising seas. You can see recordings from many of our meetings by [clicking here](#).

In 2022, we held a Climate Town Hall & Community Connection Fair that invited residents to discuss the climate crisis and learn how they could get involved in finding solutions. You can see a recording of this event by [clicking here](#).



~ Helpful Hint ~

Get media attention! Make sure you let your local news stations and journalists know what you're doing so they can amplify your message.