About the Urban Land Institute

**ULI Mission:** to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide

- A multi-disciplinary membership organization with more than 45,000 members in private enterprise and public service

- What the Urban Land Institute does:
  - Conducts Research
  - Provides a forum for sharing of best practices
  - Writes, edits, and publishes books and magazines
  - Organizes and conducts meetings
  - Directs outreach programs
  - Conducts Advisory Service Panels
Since 1947, ULI’s Advisory Services Program have helped more than 700 communities find independent, strategic, and practical solutions for the most challenging land use issues.
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ULI Panelists

Selected for their subject matter expertise to provide unbiased, volunteer recommendations

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ULI in the Caribbean

St. Thomas is the 3rd Caribbean location to sponsor a panel since 2018

- St. Croix, USVI – June 2018
- Toa Baja, Puerto Rico – December 2018
- St. Thomas, USVI – August 2019

Connective themes of recovery and resilience, leading to more robust and informed recommendations
Panel Assignment

Study Area: Havensight, Downtown Charlotte Amalie, and VIHA Properties (Lucinda Millin, Paul Pearson Gardens, and Oswald Harris Court)

How can St. Thomas achieve:

- Equitable and well-planned development of affordable housing?
- Responsible growth and diversification of the economy?
- A built environment that encourages mobility, economic growth, and has a strong sense of place?
Recovery and Resilience
What we heard
Pre- and Post-Hurricanes

- High fuel cost
- High energy cost – WAPA debt
- Lack of capital for large-scale projects

Progress
Setting and working towards clean energy goals

- 2010 VI Clean Energy Goals
- Solar water heaters and efficiency upgrades
  - Resulted in energy cost savings, $ used for more projects
- Propane turbines
- Burying power lines
Harness CDBG-DR Funding for Community Resilience

Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery

- U.S. Virgin Islands award:
  - Tranche 1: $242,684,000 for unmet needs
  - Tranche 2: $1,621,058,000
    - $846,870,000 for remaining unmet needs
    - $774,188,000 for mitigation

- Use award to fund community development (measures to scale resilience efforts)
  - Incorporate sustainability education into workforce development program / schools
Consider Structure of Energy Delivery

Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery

- Use CDBG-DR to fund community development
  - Solarize St. Thomas
    - Renewable energy emergency power systems
      - for schools, housing, and hospital
  - Energy alternatives
    - Waste-to-energy
    - Biomass

- Establish Public Utility Commission

- Decoupling and privatizing portions of WAPA
Economic Development
What We Heard
Community Stakeholder Interviews

- Support local and small businesses
- Revitalize the downtown
- Diversify the tourism offerings

Progress
Setting and working towards economic improvements

- New Administration focus on Economy
- 2040 Economic Development Plan
Equitable Workforce Development

Workforce development = economic development

- Support small business creation and growth
- Build local talent
  - Job training and placement programs
  - Partner with local schools
- Diversify the economy – reduce reliance on tourism
  - Better distribute tourism revenue
Entrepreneurship

Tools for small businesses

- Workforce development **training center**
- Incubators / co-ops for development of technical skills
- Intentional spaces for **locals to engage with tourism industry**
- Market-rate **residential housing downtown**
- **Lending and tax relief** programs
- **Dedicated Economic Development Authority** support staff for local businesses
  - VI Small Business Development Center
  - Governmental interdepartmental cooperation
Help Businesses Thrive
Create an entity to lead downtown revitalization

- Create a **Business Improvement District**
  - Can provide **Clean and Safe Services**
  - Offer events and activities to **activate downtown**
  - Partner with government to **address infrastructure and sustainability**
  - Lead in **business attraction and attention**
  - Deliver human and social services
Tourism Enhancements

Diversifying small business opportunities

- Use the promenade to **draw tourists into downtown**
- “Kiosk trail” = linear vendor’s market
- **Connect cruise tourism** with the entire island
  - Focus beyond Havensight
  - Overnight stays
  - Agritourism / adventure tourism
  - Coordinate with cruise lines

Kiosks line the promenade along Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro: [https://www.flickr.com/photos/15546071@N04/3475372168/in/photostream/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/15546071@N04/3475372168/in/photostream/)
Creative Financing Tools and Partnerships

Financing small business development

- **Public-private** and **public-public** partnerships that focus on capacity building
- Promote current Economic Development Authority tools
  - Micro-credit loan program, etc.
- CDBG-DR funding for **workforce development and small businesses**
  - $5 million already allocated
What We Heard
Community Stakeholder Interviews

- Improve affordable and senior housing
- Connection and community (walkability)
- Mandate on engagement
- Increase community outreach and opportunities for collaboration

Progress

- Stabilization of housing stock
- Initiative to reposition housing assets using HUD’s RAD program, CDBG-DR funding, and tax credit allocations
Harness Federal Funds
CDBG-DR Mitigation funds – explore creative uses

- Unique opportunity for neighborhood revitalization
- Improve physical and community resiliency for future natural disasters

Opportunity to Revitalize

- **New construction** of 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units in multifamily properties
- Assisted living and support services
- Opportunity for small-scale retail
- Create open **community spaces** and gathering places (gardens, centers, etc.)
- Rebuild without displacement
Affordable Housing Stock

Increase Housing Stock | Address deteriorating Housing

- **Restoration is essential** to the vitality of the overall community

- **Support through use of HUD CDBG-DR Mitigation funds**

- **Encourage single family housing rehabilitation**
  - Establish a pool of funds for rehabilitation grants for property owners
  - Designate and **enforce code requirements**

- **Role within VIHA** to identify vacant or abandoned homes, ascertain property interest, and track its progress
Address Community Needs
Prioritize and Implement Recommendations from the Community Needs Assessment

- **Health**
  - Reduce community stress caused by natural disasters
  - Improve access to healthcare
  - Provide incentives for health care capacity in STT

- **Built environment**
  - Aid community with post-disaster housing challenges
  - Infrastructure development

- **Educational outcomes**
  - Rebuild schools
  - Support for teachers
  - Workforce partnerships -

- **Economic stability**
  - Entrepreneurial and Workforce development
Community Engagement

Ensure community buy-in, build trust

Continuous community engagement should:

- Build on and **preserve community ties**
- **Provide structure for community** to offer feedback
- **Build partnerships** with community leaders, particularly around the **intersection of health and housing**
Community Voices: 
Picturing Community Engagement in St. Thomas
Built Environment, Placemaking, and Mobility
What We Heard

Community Stakeholder Interviews

- Residents being pushed away from waterfront
- Lack of community cohesion
- Bring tourism to downtown, create nightlife
- Articulate and celebrate St. Thomas’ cultural identity
- Protect local businesses on Main Street
- Reimagine Vendor’s Plaza
- Address traffic congestion
- Impact norm of personal vehicle use
- Improve ease of access to medical and government facilities
Mobility

How do mobility recommendations address community concerns and challenges?

- Multi-modal transportation networks promote equity and improve quality of life
- Improve safety for all users
- Strengthen connections between communities
- Transportation networks are important aspects of economic development (efficient movement of people and goods)
- Active transportation options improve health outcomes
Mobility
Recommendations

- Complete and expand **sidewalks** and pedestrian infrastructure
- Create **Bike route** network with protected lanes
- Encourage **bikeshares** and **micro mobility**
- Implement **water taxis**
- Coordinate buses and safaris
- **Regulate traffic** on Main Street
- Use **roundabouts** to manage traffic flow
- **Metered parking** in downtown
- **Structured parking** under new buildings
Suggested Plan

- Redevelop VIHA sites, hospital, and schools
  - **Community** gathering spaces
  - Bike and pedestrian **paths**
  - Adjust **parking**
  - **Build in phases**
  - Consolidate medical buildings
  - Education and workforce housing

- **Consolidate** government buildings

- **Way-finding** system

- Havensight / Cruise ship **docks**

- Downtown Charlotte Amalie
  - **Community park and beach** space
  - Vendor’s Plaza redesign
  - **Underground** power lines

- **Landscape** public areas

- Create **community development programming**
Reinforces the vitality of the overall community through enhancing existing strengths within its districts.
"The Nest"

**Educational Facilities** - Enrich key education facilities as an anchor within the neighborhood and boost residential appeal
"Healthcare Hill"

**Hospital and Care Center** - Augment and consolidate the hospital site, adding complimentary uses such as senior and accessory medical uses.
“Oswald Harris Cottage Community”

Multi-Family Residential – multi-family housing density that compliments its surrounding context while aligning key commercial assets along the mainstreet and incorporating central community facilities.
Lucinda A. Millin Senior Homes & Paul M. Pearson Cottage Community

Reposition and mirror commercial activity along Veterans Drive promoting accessibility to and from the waterfront. Modernize Millin residential community and create outdoor improvements throughout the site.
Paul M. Pearson Cottage Community Cross Section through Pearson and Veteran’s Drive into Havensight

Demonstration of the cottage massing, the live work cottages, and the vendor pavilions along Veterans Drive concepts
Havensight
Promenade and Veteran’s Drive
**Downtown**

**Veteran’s Drive and Community Beach** - Cultivate the pedestrian experience along Veterans Drive enticing more connectivity between residential and commercial centers through investments in transportation, parking facilities, and shade structures.
Downtown

Emancipation Square, Vendor’s Plaza, Fort Christian Memorial Park - Enrich the Emancipation Gardens Park environment allowing for visibility along Veterans Drive creating space for community and events sponsored by BID.
Regional Connectivity

Conceptual approach for Charlotte Amalie, Havensight, and VIHA sites within the greater waterfront, supporting connectivity along corridor to the port and airport to the west.
Governance
What We Heard
Community Stakeholder Interviews

- Lack of **coordination** between government agencies
- Lack of **transparency** and watchdogs
- Lack of **engagement** as a fundamental principle

Progress
New Leadership

- New administrative leadership
- Opportunity to reform government
- Opportunity to incorporate residents along recovery
Governmental Coordination and Leadership

- Improve coordination among agencies
  - Cluster agencies for economic development and disaster recovery
- **Pause current VIHA rebuilding** to conduct comprehensive planning
- Engage community in planning efforts at all stages of the process
- Hire skilled talent
- **Grow capacity:** vocational programs, talent incentives
Comprehensive Planning
Streamline efforts, align goals
- Conduct comprehensive planning of the island and develop a master plan
- Develop corps of planners
- Adopt form-based code

Enhance Networks
Build up social networks and traditions
- Social capital is stressed
- Catalogue current social support services and activities
Leadership

- Pursue **honesty and transparency** in communication and benchmarking throughout processes
- Ensure **strategic and organized planning** occurs at all levels of government
- **Enlist a skilled team** that supports and meets critical needs to position the strategic vision towards success
- Demonstrate **delivery and implementation** on strategic vision at multiple scales.
THANK YOU

Advisory Services

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