

LONG-RANGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RESILIENCE PLANNING  
IN LOÍZA, PUERTO RICO

BY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the devastation of Hurricanes María and Irma, more community planning funding has been allocated to Puerto Rico than ever before. In the coming months, the Municipality of Loíza will have the opportunity to apply for disaster recovery, natural hazard mitigation, and rebuilding funding. Federal recovery funding can create an opportunity for Loíza to shape the future of its residents and future generations. If the Municipality prepares at these early stages of the process, such that they are ready by the time funding rolls out, there is great potential for arriving at solutions tailored to the community's needs.

By adopting and carrying out new plans, Loíza can become more **resilient**. Planning can help Loíza **prepare** for storms, economic crises, pandemics, and other challenges. Planning can help Loíza **recover** after the most severe periods of crisis are over, and it can also help Loíza **adapt** to become stronger as these challenges become more intense.

In the immediate future, Loíza's efforts are best focused on developing a resilience-based recovery plan to frame requests that take advantage of federal funding towards mitigation and recovery actions. A surgical process that begins with a series of projects and strategies related to immediate community concerns will bring to light recurring issues that will spark a wider vision of the Municipality to help guide long-range planning.

Planning for Loíza's future must be guided by the best science available. Understanding time horizons for when relocation will have to take place will enable the Municipality to determine appropriate investments locally and elsewhere, to pursue suitable solutions for the community. While residents are already "living with water," flooding events will become more and more common. Rather than a sudden decision to relocate, this will progressively transition into part-time residency amid periodic inundation. Under these conditions resilience means having the capacity to live with water while retaining a viable economy, protecting the vulnerable, and sustaining community life and vitality.

While recovery is the most urgent objective, it is also important for the community to think how they survive long-term. A fitting long-term approach for Loíza would be an overarching resilience plan that addresses coastal storms and economic development matters, by providing the framework for implementation-oriented mitigation and recovery plans. This report explores how the pieces of that overarching plan may eventually fit together.

## **WHY RESILIENCE?**

Resilience is the forefront standard of recovery and community development around the world, especially in hazard-prone areas such as coastal zones and hurricane zones like Loíza. There are countless sensible reasons to pursue resilience. The increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters and economic crises have underscored the need for individuals, communities, institutions, and systems to learn to survive, adapt and thrive in the face of adversities. Ensuring that development strategies and investment decisions enhance, rather than undermine, a community's resilience, helps the people living and working in it—particularly the poor and vulnerable—to survive and bounce back when widespread disruption threatens their wellbeing. Fortunately, many ongoing initiatives in Loíza and Puerto Rico already recognize the need to rebuild with resilience in mind.

## **STRATEGIC VS. COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY PLANNING**

There are tradeoffs between strategic and comprehensive approaches. Comprehensive planning demands substantial time and work, long-term horizons, lots of participation, and deep knowledge of all the working parts in the community—most of which are beyond the reach of a small community with limited capital and labor capacity like Loíza. Comprehensive planning is better suited for communities with greater existing capacity, that are sufficiently complex and self-contained to perform meaningful systems analyses—such as the Commonwealth at large.

The shorter-term nature of strategic approaches often means that they are better able to adjust goals and tactics when inevitable changes happen. Strategic planning allows a community to identify its priorities so that they can better focus their resources and efforts, rather than follow a one-size-fits-all script.

Given the rudimentary capacity of Loíza's planning department, and the many competing interests within the community, traditional comprehensive planning would present considerable capacity and delegation challenges. It would be a distraction that would divert time and resources away from more urgent matters--flooding, tourism, land tenure, and others expressed by the municipality and community leadership. Further, Loíza's territory faces great uncertainty given that most of its settled areas are prone to flooding, making it especially challenging to make the kind of long-term projections that comprehensive planning seeks. A comprehensive document produced under these conditions would not excite decision-makers or the community. The Municipality cannot afford the possibility that by the time a document requiring this much work is completed, no one will use it.

Mitigation and resilience efforts must indisputably drive the planning conversation in Loíza as pivotal factors to the survival of the community. I urge the municipality adopt two documents as their conceptual models. First, the *City Resilience Framework*, because provides a holistic articulation of factors that contribute to a community's resilience and can help Loíza diagnose strengths and weaknesses in their efforts. More importantly, there already exists an up-to-date resilience strategy for the Island that uses this framework, *Reimagina Puerto Rico*, my second recommendation. It can be a substantial time-saver for Loíza to take advantage of the relevant and timely findings of Reimagina, which identifies the most outstanding needs of the people of Puerto Rico.

After a careful assessment of existing conditions in Loíza, and the advice of experienced scholars that have generously weighed in on this investigation, my recommendation for the Municipality is to choose the path of a portfolio of strategic plans, rather than one of comprehensive planning. A three-to-five-year planning approach is likely to yield sensible and timely results, and provide

adaptability to adjust course as needed in Loíza's fast-changing conditions. A collection of resilience-based strategic plans seems like a good compromise, and possibly the best we can do under the current circumstances.

## **RESILIENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic development in Loíza must include planning for the most vulnerable and ensure an equitable distribution of benefits amongst different sections of society, to improve the community's living standards. The following will be important sets of recommendations, which I hope can serve as groundwork for Loíza to develop its own goals and strategies.

### **PLAN EFFICIENTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY**

Efficient and democratic planning is founded on community participation, support to local initiatives, and technical expertise. The community must be able to recognize its recurring economic vulnerabilities—for example, disrupted education services, deficient labor productivity, poorly educated workforce, excessive dependency on a single industry, unreliable access to transportation and electricity, employment located in vulnerable areas, etc. Similarly, they should identify the assets the community currently has and the unique features of the Municipality.

Extensive involvement from the community in planning efforts is vital to define and implement a collective vision of resilience and sustainability. Planning efforts that yield the most effective and long-lasting results are usually those that harness people's passions and aspirations for their personal advancement. To support and guide entrepreneurship, being able to provide full confidentiality, and some level of personalized dedication and business guidance to entrepreneurs could be of monumental help.

Listen to what residents, businesses, and members of the diasporic community want, and reflect it back to them. Identify and reconcile wherever possible what the community believes, what it wants, and what technical expertise suggests—do not ignore the contradictions and the mutually exclusive options. This way, the municipality will be able to develop clear goals as starting points, and work backward from those goals to identify the most effective way to get there.

Existing conditions in the community and the region need to be thoroughly documented by mapping current business activities. The planning process must be informed by technical expertise—economic analyses, climate impacts, forecasts, etc.— and findings need to be widely and carefully communicated to the community. These ought to serve as the basis for periodically updated assessments of the local economy, so that the Municipality can have a good handle on its resources to identify emerging economic sectors that may build on the community’s competitive assets, and lead to a more diversified economy. While tourism may be the primary livelihood in Loíza, efforts to broaden the revenue base increase stability during downturns that disproportionately impact any single industry.

## PROTECT THE ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY

Development and business activities must not jeopardize resilience efforts in the Municipality in order to safeguard the established built environment. Resilience standards must be clearly articulated, and plans for any parcel need to account for the costs and benefits of construction given the increasing probability of inundation.

Strategies aimed at helping small businesses factor in natural hazards could include providing them with guidance to develop and implement a disaster resilience strategy: helping them identify their vulnerabilities, think about business continuity in the face of disruptions, and how to resume operations quickly and safely.

Currently, much of the economy moves informally, which makes it challenging to access credit. Credit is a practical necessity because it expedites the transactions between buyers and sellers

that make up the skeleton of an economy. Thus, strategies in this aspect should aim at helping the community access credit, finance, and loans, along with guidance on responsible borrowing and financial planning. Allocating surge capital resources in case of a disaster would help in the recovery of low-income people.

## PREPARE FOR THE LONG TERM

Establishing realistic assessments of the amount of work, time, and resources that the planning team can afford to dedicate to planning efforts is essential in order to determine the few matters that are most deficient and that would benefit the largest number of people. Focusing the Municipality's energy on solving those to the best of their abilities will generate momentum in the community.

People-based strategies aimed at education and youth, and business-focused strategies that identify and develop assets that the Municipality currently has could be a good place to start in Loíza's path towards economic development. Nonetheless, several other issues impacting economic development in the community should also be considered when analyzing potential gain from choosing one matter over another: natural hazard mitigation, public infrastructure and services, safe housing and land tenure, financial and business planning, etc.

A collective vision for resilience will help integrate less-urgent planning aspects into the primary strategic goals. Public safety concerns, for instance, could be integrated into youth and economic security strategies, including economic security programs that improve the lives of vulnerable families and individuals experiencing poverty, as well as initiatives aimed at education and keeping the youth engaged in activities that contribute towards a holistic growth. Investments in children, youth, and entrepreneurs are "portable," and emphasizing on these approaches will enable Loiceños to have greater adaptive capacity even if they must relocate. A systematic approach based on industry data projections targeted at growing trades or careers in Puerto Rico can make small investments in educational incentives go a long way, and result in on-Island

opportunities that secure the future workforce is able to access a job, as well as to support growing sectors.

Fostering collaboration and coordination is fundamental to the larger goals of building capacity and strengthening social capital. Strategies aimed at building social capital could support efforts to build collective bargaining power amongst industry clusters. Ideas for projects that foster collaboration and coordination already exist in the community. Embracing some of these projects, especially those that involve little capital investment, could be a good starting point to spark partnerships amongst the residents. Because climate change is an imminent danger to the majority of Loíza's territory, we must acknowledge that relocation is on the horizon, and plan accordingly. Collaboration and social capital will make it easier for industry partnerships to—eventually—survive relocation.

Planners and stakeholders will have to think creatively about economic resilience and resilience to coastal storms. Low-investment but still imaginative approaches to site development could help the community meet its goals. This might involve a variety of strategies, such as dune and wetland restoration, selective elevation or relocation of structures within the Municipality, and ways to continue to tolerate occasional flooding in some locations.

Actions that build resilience are good for the local economy, whether or not a natural or economic shock occurs. Building resilience involves making people and institutions stronger so that even when not living full time in the territory of Loíza, they can thrive and help others who are in or from the territory thrive too.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The devastating effects of Hurricanes María and Irma are difficult to put into words, and have reshaped Loíza deeply, ravaging through the homes and livelihoods of so many of its residents. In addition to the Puerto Rico's struggling economy, Loíza faces major environmental challenges: drastic flooding and coastal erosion, worsened by sea-level rise, stronger tropical storms, and other effects of climate change. It is a cruel irony that underprivileged and vulnerable populations often bear a disproportionate amount of the effects of climate change, despite seldom contributing to its causes. While the future is uncertain, we can expect that Loíza will only face increasing challenges in the future, as natural hazards become more frequent and severe.

As an encouraging response, more community planning funding has been allocated to Puerto Rico post-María than ever before. By adopting and carrying out new plans, Loíza can become more **resilient**. Planning can help Loíza **prepare** for storms, economic crises, pandemics, and other challenges. Planning can help Loíza **recover** after the most severe periods of crisis are over, and it can also help Loíza **adapt** to become stronger as these challenges become more intense.

In the coming months, Loíza will have the opportunity to apply for disaster recovery, natural hazard mitigation, and rebuilding funding. Federal recovery funding can create an opportunity for Loíza to shape the future of its residents and future generations at the individual, sector, barrio, and municipality scale. Some of this funding has already been disbursed, but the majority has yet to make it to the Island. If the Municipality gets organized and prepared at these early stages of the process, such that they are ready by the time the remaining funding rolls out, there is great potential for arriving at solutions tailored to the community's needs.

Undeniably, when communities are not being engaged, it is challenging to do meaningful community planning. Community participation in Loíza is key to any and all planning efforts, not only for community empowerment, but also to address the widespread impression of historically

deficient stakeholder involvement, to avoid frustration at the lack of information, to guarantee that their concerns are heard, considered, and addressed, and to avoid skepticism of qualified outsiders' proposals and intentions. Rapid advances in digital technology are transforming the ways citizens can be involved in planning processes, and can play a key role in reaching groups that are traditionally underrepresented.

At this moment, Loíza's most pressing needs call for a resilience-based recovery plan to help frame requests to fund-specific mitigation and recovery actions. In essence, this plan would be a list of projects and strategies related to other long-term community concerns, and it would focus primarily on timeframes, budgets, entities, and other aspects of implementation. This surgical approach to recovery will bring about a wider vision to help guide long-range planning through a more comprehensive resilience plan that addresses coastal storms and economic development matters, primarily around tourism.

In the immediate future, Loíza's efforts are best focused on taking advantage of federal funding. Simply put, for now the municipality does not need to work out every detail—just those regarding critical elements in the next 3-5 years. However, as the process of strategic recovery planning reveals recurring issues, larger regional trends, and promising pathways, it will also spark conversations about the future of Loíza. When the time comes, it will be great to have a larger view of where the community is going, and that is the purpose of exploring local comprehensive planning at this otherwise premature stage.

Planning for Loíza's future must be guided by the best science available. Understanding time horizons for when relocation will have to take place will enable the Municipality to determine appropriate investments locally and elsewhere, to pursue suitable solutions for the community. While residents are already “living with water,” flooding events will become more and more common. Rather than a sudden decision to relocate, this will progressively transition into part-time residency amid periodic inundation. Under these conditions resilience means having the capacity to live with water while retaining a viable economy, protecting the vulnerable, and sustaining community life and vitality.

While recovery is the most urgent target, it is also Important for the community to think how they survive long-term. A fitting long-term approach for Loíza would be an overarching resilience plan that could serve as the framework for implementation-oriented mitigation and recovery plans. Coordinated and integrated efforts allow us to organize and develop the building blocks of larger common goals. This document lays out how the pieces of that overarching plan may eventually fit together.

## 2. WHY RESILIENCE?

First, it is essential to illustrate why we talk about resilience when it comes to planning efforts. Resilience is the forefront standard of recovery and community development around the world, especially in hazard-prone areas such as coastal zones and hurricane zones like Loíza. At the very least, we must recognize that FEMA consistently talks about planning for resilience as a fundamental priority—Puerto Rico’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Action Plan references resilience 168 times—therefore, from a strategic standpoint, it would be suitable to ‘speak their language’ when framing plans and proposals.

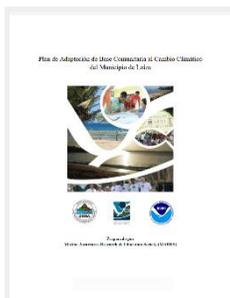
More importantly, there are countless sensible reasons to pursue resilience. The increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters and economic crises have underscored the need for communities to learn to adapt and thrive in the face of diverse challenges—to become more resilient. Resilience refers to the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, and systems to survive, adapt, and thrive, no matter what stresses and shocks they encounter. Resilience is not a ‘plan,’ but it is layered into every part of a community and every department of its government. Ensuring that development strategies and investment decisions enhance, rather than undermine, a community’s resilience, helps the people living and working in it—particularly the poor and vulnerable—to survive and bounce back when widespread disruption threatens their wellbeing.

In disaster-prone areas like Loíza, resilience can help to bridge the gap between risk reduction and climate change adaptation. While traditional risk assessments and measures to reduce specific foreseeable risks will continue to play an important role in urban planning, resilience accepts the possibility that a wide range of disruptive events may occur but are not necessarily predictable. Instead, it focuses on enhancing the performance of a system in the face of multiple hazards, rather than preventing or mitigating the loss of assets due to specific events (Arup 2015, II). Pursuing recovery and economic development comes from the resilient attitude of a community, and it is worthwhile to acknowledge that many ongoing initiatives in Loíza and Puerto Rico already recognize the need to rebuild with resilience in mind.

Table 1a – Loíza’s Resilience Efforts

**Climate Change Adaptation Plan, Municipality of Loíza**

2018



Lays out risks and vulnerabilities that the Municipality and the community have identified. Recommends 18 adaptive actions that can serve to frame CDBG and FEMA funding requests.

**Long-term Municipal Recovery Plan, Municipality of Loíza**

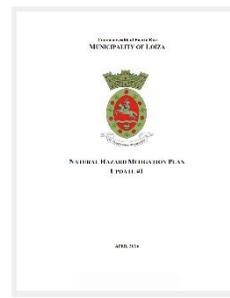
2018



Preliminary study post-María focused on Loíza’s disadvantaged geography when withstanding coastal storms and flooding events. States an intention to onwards produce action plans that consider climate change and external urban development that adversely affects Loíza. Recognizes the need to strengthen capacity across urban systems.

**Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, Municipality of Loíza**

2016



Identifies and analyzes seven natural risks: Flooding, Earthquake, High Wind, Landslide, Liquefaction, Tsunami and Coastal Erosion. Lays out 40 Mitigation Action proposals that could serve as the baseline for specific CDBG and FEMA funding requests.

**Río Grande de Loíza Watershed Discovery Report**

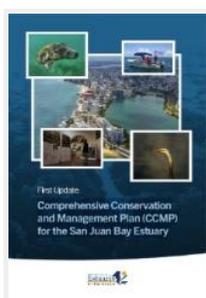
2017



Outlines a holistic approach to understanding and collecting data on risks. The stakeholder outreach and data collection process used has the potential to guide similar barrio-level or neighborhood-level risk assessment studies in Loíza.

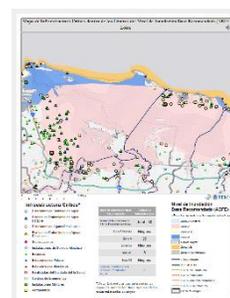
**Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for the San Juan Bay Estuary**

2015



Advocates for strict enforcement of coastal conservation laws around green infrastructure, aquatic debris, and integrating public stakeholders. Notes that in the past, these laws have generated citizen participation and ownership in the conservation of Loíza’s coast.

**Loíza’s Critical Infrastructure within Advisory Base Flood Elevations**



Maps critical infrastructure within advised base flooding elevation (ABFE) limits in the Municipality.

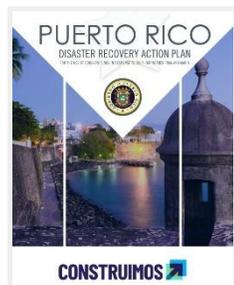
Table 1b – Puerto Rico’s Resilience Efforts

**Reimagina Puerto Rico**  
**2018**



Resilience strategy developed by the Resilient Puerto Rico Advisory Commission. Identifies natural infrastructure and physical infrastructure as key areas of focus for recovery and resilience planning in the island. Prepared through a clear effort to engage multiple stakeholders and multiple approaches to recovery and resilience planning.

**Disaster Recovery Action Plan**  
**2018**



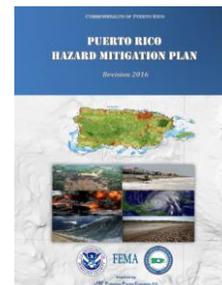
Outlines the scope, nature, and funding allocation of Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) programs. Helps communities navigate funding and processes around 27 CDBG-DR programs.

**Build Back Better**  
**2017**



Funding request for reconstruction post-María. Emphasizes on the importance of rebuilding public infrastructure and services to a better condition than the original, such that they can better withstand and overcome future disaster events.

**Puerto Rico Hazard Mitigation Plan**  
**2016**



Seeks to develop short- and long-term mitigation policy that meets the requirements for federal subsidies and programs offered by FEMA and the US Department of Homeland Security. Aims to reduce vulnerability and the loss of life and property generated by hazards through a coordinated mitigation strategy between the Central Government, Municipalities, and the citizens.

### 3. STRATEGIC VS. COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY PLANNING

In the twentieth century, the typical comprehensive plan was a general policy document focused on land use and physical development. The plan was divided into separate elements, and it was prepared through a “top-down” process. This model began to change towards the close of the century in response to societal change and trends in planning practice, such as increased demand for citizen participation and a greater focus on implementation (Godschalk, 2015, 5).

By the early 2000s, many states had wholly or partially revamped their planning statutes in an effort to update planning tools that were no longer providing adequate choices for meeting the growth and challenges of the twenty-first century (Meck 2002, xxix). To help in this process of reexamination, the American Planning Association, APA, prepared the Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook, which contains model statutes for planning and the management of change. Chapter 7 of the Legislative Guidebook, on Local Planning, examines the categories of a traditional local comprehensive plan, which I have listed on Table 2.

The process of reexamination that led to the creation of the Guidebook is not only inevitable, but it is desirable if communities are to respond effectively to change. Nearly two decades later, the Guidebook still provides detailed understanding of the many moving parts of community planning—yet planners recognize its limitations. The Guidebook presents a rigid framework that fails to note that planning components do not behave like islands, but that they function in concert with one another—and this realization has echoed across planning spheres.

Between the years 2000 and 2012, more than 25,000 local governments of all types and sizes developed hazard mitigation plans for their communities. Then, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, compared the categories generally included in local comprehensive plans—also listed on Table 2—with categories in the newly developed hazard mitigation plans. They observed that many of the communities missed the opportunity to connect hazard mitigation planning to other elements of community planning (FEMA 2013, 1-2). So, in

2013, FEMA published *Integrating Hazard Mitigation into Local Planning*, where they made available tools and reference material to help bridge gaps between the two and achieve greater resilience. Given the critical role of hazard mitigation in planning for coastal communities, the document can be a good resource to help Loíza weave hazard mitigation into other aspects of planning.

Table 2 – Community Planning Frameworks

<p><b>Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook</b></p> <p>APA, 2002</p>	<p><b>Integrating Hazard Mitigation Into Local Planning</b></p> <p>FEMA, 2015</p>	<p><b>Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans</b></p> <p>APA, 2015</p>	<p><b>City Resilience Framework</b></p> <p>Arup &amp; Rockefeller Foundation, 2015</p>
<p><b>MANDATORY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues and opportunities</li> <li>• Land use</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Community facilities</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Program of implementation</li> </ul> <p><b>MANDATORY WITH OPT-OUT ALTERNATIVE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Critical and sensitive areas</li> <li>• Natural hazards</li> </ul> <p><b>OPTIONAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture, forest, and scenic preservation</li> <li>• Human services</li> <li>• Community design</li> <li>• Historic preservation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community vision and overall goals</li> <li>• Existing conditions</li> <li>• Land use</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Environmental and natural resources conservation</li> <li>• Recreation and open space</li> <li>• Cultural resources</li> <li>• Historic preservation</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Public facilities and services</li> <li>• Capital improvements</li> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Goals, policies, and objectives relating to each plan element</li> <li>• Mapping of existing and future land uses, infrastructure, public facilities, and environmental features</li> </ul>	<p><b>PRINCIPLES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Livable built environment</li> <li>• Harmony with nature</li> <li>• Interwoven equity</li> <li>• Healthy community</li> <li>• Responsible regionalism</li> </ul> <p><b>PROCESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authentic participation</li> <li>• Accountable implementation</li> </ul> <p><b>ATTRIBUTES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent content</li> <li>• Coordinated characteristics</li> </ul>	<p><b>HEALTH &amp; WELLBEING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal human vulnerability</li> <li>• Diverse livelihoods and employment</li> <li>• Effective safeguards to human health and life</li> </ul> <p><b>ECONOMY &amp; SOCIETY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective identity and mutual support</li> <li>• Comprehensive security and rule of law</li> <li>• Sustainable economy</li> </ul> <p><b>INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; ECOSYSTEMS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces exposure and fragility</li> <li>• Effective provision of critical services</li> <li>• Reliable mobility and communications</li> </ul> <p><b>LEADERSHIP &amp; STRATEGY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective leadership and management</li> <li>• Empowered stakeholders</li> <li>• Integrated development planning</li> </ul>

At around the same time, the American Planning Association also moved away from their earlier model of separate categories in the Legislative Guidebook, and in 2015, they published *Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans*. The document begins by identifying key trends that will shape comprehensive planning practice in the twenty-first century:

**Resilience**

Communities will need to become better able to withstand and recover from disturbance and change

**Equity**

Increasing inequality in economic status and basic quality-of-life issues—health outcomes and vulnerability to disasters—is a major concern

**Systems thinking**

The traditional model of separate topical elements is being replaced by an approach that views these topics as complex systems whose interactions determine the form and function of the community as a whole

**Community engagement**

A critical need exists to involve groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the comprehensive planning process, and digital technology is transforming the ways citizens can be reached

**Implementation**

Establishing priorities, responsibilities, and timeframes; effectively allocating resources; developing new implementation models; using targets and metrics to monitor progress; and communicating stories of success

**Adaptation**

Uncertain conditions subject to forces beyond the control of local governments call for monitoring and feedback mechanisms to adjust implementation programs on an ongoing basis

*Sustaining Places* offers a framework of standards to help planners create livable, healthy communities with resilient economies, social equity, and strong regional ties. Its components—listed in Table 2—are articulated as ideal aims to be strategically pursued by planners and the communities they serve.

Strategic approaches address a defined issue by building bridges across the boundaries of categories of traditional comprehensive planning. Strategic plans are developed around focused, relevant goals that are then translated into actions to be implemented within a few-years

timeline. The shorter-term nature of strategic approaches often means that they are better able to adjust goals and tactics when inevitable changes happen.

In 2015, Arup and the Rockefeller Foundation developed a strategy specifically targeted at building resilience. The *City Resilience Framework* provides a holistic articulation of the numerous factors that contribute to a community's resilience, presented through a set of goals, also listed in Table 2. The City Resilience Framework can help Loíza diagnose strengths and weaknesses in their resilience efforts. More importantly, there already exists a resilience strategy for the Island that uses this framework: *Reimagina Puerto Rico*. It can be a substantial time-saver for Loíza to take advantage of the many relevant and up-to-date findings already available in *Reimagina*—which is not a conventional comprehensive plan, but an adequate assortment of strategic plans designed to meet the most outstanding needs of the people of Puerto Rico. For these reasons, I highly recommend the municipality adopt both documents as their conceptual models.

Strategic planning allows a community to identify its priorities so that they can better focus their resources and efforts, rather than follow a one-size-fits-all script. Systems thinking recognizes that the community is made up of complex systems, and intrinsic correlations between traditional plan categories entail that changes in one area create a ripple effect and have ramifications in other areas. For example, if *Economic Development* in Loíza is heavily dependent on tourism, then interventions that positively impact *Historic Preservation*, *Cultural Resources* or *Environmental Conservation* also indirectly improve the local economy.

There are tradeoffs between strategic and comprehensive approaches. Comprehensive planning demands substantial time and work, long-term horizons, lots of participation, and deep knowledge of all the working parts in the community—most of which are beyond the reach of a small community with limited capital and labor capacity like Loíza. Comprehensive planning is better suited for communities with greater existing capacity, that are sufficiently complex and self-contained to perform meaningful systems analyses—such as the Commonwealth at large.

Given the rudimentary capacity of Loíza's planning department, and the many competing interests within the community, traditional comprehensive planning would present considerable capacity and delegation challenges. It would be a distraction that would divert time and resources away from more urgent matters--flooding, tourism, land tenure, and other expressed by the municipality and community leadership. Further, Loíza's territory faces great uncertainty given that most of its settled areas are prone to flooding, making it especially challenging to make the kind of long-term projections that comprehensive planning seeks. A comprehensive document produced under these conditions would not excite decision-makers or the community. The Municipality cannot afford the possibility that by the time a document requiring this much work is completed, no one will use it.

One of the primary goals and greatest challenges of traditional comprehensive planning is the expectation of internal consistency. Internal consistency refers to the general agreement between the multiple items that make-up a comprehensive plan, measured by the correlation between items. Thereby, an item that is unlikely to be highly correlated with the other items, or perceived to not belong in there at all, can threaten the internal consistency of a comprehensive plan and ultimately cast doubt on its suitability.

In the context of Loíza, traditional comprehensive planning for the sake of strict internal consistency can be a tricky approach, because it could needlessly call into question what otherwise could be good initiatives for the community. While competing interests in the community present challenges of their own, a traditional comprehensive plan would be too drastic of a response to restrain them. Instead, and favorably, a resilience strategy can be broad enough that it can be worked into virtually any element of a community's vision as the cohesive device of an overarching plan.

A compelling advantage of a strategic approach is to not be driven to craft standalone solutions for every category in a comprehensive plan. Instead, strategic planning recognizes that some categories require more comprehensiveness than others, giving way for less-critical categories to be nested within those of high priority. For example, mitigation and resilience efforts must

indisputably drive the planning conversation in Loíza as pivotal factors to the survival of the community. Thereby, a strategic plan primarily around *Natural Hazards* and *Critical and Sensitive Areas* could contain a secondary component of *Community Facilities* that responds to the strategies proposed towards the larger goals of resilience and mitigation of natural hazards. Likewise, the *Land Use* element of a comprehensive plan is not the only element pertinent to hazard mitigation. High hazard areas can be identified as opportunities for acquisition or preservation within the recreation, open space, or environmental plan elements. Such areas often provide natural and beneficial functions, and can serve as buffers between hazards and developed areas (FEMA 2015, 3-4).

After a careful assessment of existing conditions in Loíza, and the advice of experienced scholars that have generously weighed in on this investigation, my recommendation for the Municipality is to choose the path of a portfolio of strategic plans, rather than one of comprehensive planning. A three-to-five-year planning approach is likely to yield sensible and timely results, and provide adaptability to adjust course as needed in fast-changing conditions. A collection of resilience-based strategic plans seems like a good compromise, and possibly the best we can do under the current circumstances.

## 4. RESILIENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development and economic growth are terms that often are, mistakenly, used interchangeably. However, they measure different things: economic growth refers to an increase in gross domestic product per capita, while economic development is concerned with an improvement in the quality of life and living standards of the population. Economic development looks at a wider range of factors than just GDP, including:

- Income and employment
- Education
- Life expectancy
- Healthcare
- Basic infrastructure
- Quality of housing
- Quality of environment
- Access to resources and services

One would expect economic growth to lead to more economic development, because a higher GDP enables more to be spent on the factors that determine quality of life; however, the link is not guaranteed. Factors affecting economic growth, especially in developing economies, often get in the way. Economic growth could bypass the poorest groups of society because their skills are not competitive enough to take part, or because inequity and corruption have wasted the proceeds of economic growth, or concentrated them in the hands of a wealthy few. Whether economic growth becomes a catalyst of economic development depends on the nature of that growth—it must include planning for the most vulnerable. Therefore, the fundamental duty of governance ought to be ensuring an equitable distribution of benefits amongst different sections of society, to safeguard that proceeds of economic growth are used to improve the community's living standards.

Loíza will develop its own goals and strategies—but after this study of the community I know enough to say that the following will be important sets of recommendations, which I hope can serve as groundwork for future planning efforts.

## PLAN EFFICIENTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY

Efficient and democratic planning is founded on community participation, support to local initiatives, and technical expertise.

- Identify recurring vulnerabilities and unique features of the Municipality
- Listen to what residents, businesses, and members of the diasporic community want, and reflect it back to them
- Support entrepreneurs with confidentiality, personalized dedication, and one-on-one business guidance
- Use technical expertise to inform the process—economic analyses, climate impacts, forecasts, etc.—and carefully communicate findings to stakeholders

Extensive involvement from the community in planning efforts is vital to define and implement a collective vision of resilience and sustainability. In order to reach consensus on a set of actions, the community must be able to recognize its recurring economic vulnerabilities—for example, disrupted education services, deficient labor productivity, poorly educated workforce, excessive dependency on a single industry, unreliable access to transportation and electricity, employment located in vulnerable areas, etc. Similarly, they should identify the assets the community currently has and the unique features of the Municipality.

Stakeholder involvement is a two-way street. Engaging the community does not necessarily require introducing radical proposals, but rather keeping an open mind and listening to what the constituents want. The most ingenious ideas may already exist in the community, waiting to be given a platform. Planning efforts that yield the most effective and long-lasting results are usually those that harness people's passions and aspirations for their personal advancement. As much as we value lessons learned from precedents elsewhere, foreign initiatives are unlikely to succeed in a different place, because they tend to miss the nuanced relationships that take place within the new community system. Local, empirical knowledge is invaluable and often underestimated. Listen to what residents, businesses, and members of the diasporic community want, and reflect

it back to them. Identify and reconcile wherever possible what the community believes, what it wants, and what technical expertise suggests—do not ignore the contradictions and the mutually exclusive options. This way, the municipality will be able to develop clear goals as starting points, and work backward from those goals to identify the most effective way to get there.

To support and guide entrepreneurship, the economic development planning team should be willing to wear many hats: those of collective planners, and those of community consultants. As community consultants, being able to provide full confidentiality, and some level of personalized dedication and business guidance to entrepreneurs could be of monumental help. Community meetings are not accessible to everyone for a variety of reasons, and the public nature of the discussion that takes place at these meetings is too broad to help individuals materialize their ideas in a meaningful way. Great entrepreneurial ideas are unlikely to surface during community meetings—be it out of fear of an idea getting stolen, or out of hesitancy to ask detailed questions that may be irrelevant to other community members and feel like a lack of consideration for their time.

There needs to be a clear messaging that investments deployed in Loíza should aim to contribute to its resilience. Fortunately, there are many resources the Planning Department can reference in order to achieve this—and I reiterate my earlier recommendation for the Municipality to closely follow Reimagina Puerto Rico. At this moment, Reimagina is the most current resilience strategy developed for the Island. Their recommendations are based on the findings of a diverse Puerto Rican advisory commission, who examine issues and concepts that are pertinent to Puerto Rico. Given that the strategy was developed using the City Resilience Framework (see Appendix), any recommendation that may seem too broad for Loíza can be made more specific by identifying the goals it is trying to achieve. It would not only make sense for Loíza to adopt Reimagina as a conceptual model, but referencing their findings will save the local planners time and resources.

Knowing what else is taking place around the community is vital for making fact-based predictions and decisions on industry investments. Existing conditions in the community and the region need to be thoroughly documented by mapping current business activities, and by performing a regional market study. The planning process must be informed by technical expertise, and findings need to be widely and carefully communicated to the community. The Los Alamos Tourism Strategic Plan presents a good example of how to document tourism trends and prospects that could serve as a good reference to Loíza (Los Alamos 2018, 14-27). A study of this nature could be the basis for regularly updated assessments of the local economy within a timeframe—e.g., every 3, 5, or 10 years—so that the Municipality can have a good handle on its resources to identify emerging economic sectors that may build on the community’s competitive assets, and lead to a more diversified economy. While tourism may be the primary livelihood in Loíza, efforts to broaden the revenue base increase stability during downturns that disproportionately impact any single industry.

As an institution, the Municipality has the capability to spark collaborations with educational institutions that could help and benefit from working in real-world matters with the community. For example, exploring industry and sector trends, target demographics, market opportunities, and other economic indicators might be something that graduate students in Planning or Marketing could help develop, by referencing the Strategic Master Plan of the Port of New Orleans’ inventory of existing and potential sources of economic prosperity (Port NOLA 2018, 75-76, 79-90, 94, 96). Other examples of student collaboration may incorporate tourism marketing and branding strategies for the Municipality, such as establishing a design theme by helping create cohesive signage, maps, and information of services available in the community, creating an online presence, and other campaigns that help boost travel, etc.

## PROTECT THE ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY

Resilience ought to operate at all scales, and it begins with the ability of households, businesses, and neighborhoods to be prepared to withstand natural hazards.

- Articulate clear resilience standards so that any new development abides by safe development practices and accounts for the increasing probability of inundation
- Safeguard the established built environment
- Help small businesses develop a disaster resilience strategy
- Improve access to credit and business financial planning
- Allocate surge capital resources in case of a disaster to help in low-income people's recovery

Construction development and business activities must not jeopardize any resilience efforts in the Municipality. To ensure this, resilience standards must be clearly articulated, so that new development, in addition to being located outside of floodplains as much as possible, abides by safe development practices from the moment it begins. Plans for any parcel need to account for the costs and benefits of construction given the increasing probability of inundation. Strategies to ensure the safety of existing development from flooding and storms may include encouraging reconstruction systems that can withstand extreme weather and/or do not involve large capital investment, and ensuring that these building materials are locally available at an accessible price.

Strategies aimed at helping small businesses factor in natural hazards could include providing them with guidance to develop and implement a disaster resilience strategy. Helping them identify their vulnerabilities, think about business continuity in the face of disruptions, and how to resume operations quickly and safely can help them build resilience into their plans—how will their facilities behave, how will their supply chain be affected, how will their clientele fluctuate before, during and after a disaster?

Currently, much of the economy moves informally, which makes it challenging to access credit. Credit is the ability to borrow money or access goods or services with the understanding that you will pay later. It is a practical necessity and an important part of the economy because it expedites the transactions between buyers and sellers that make up the skeleton of an economy. Strategies aimed at helping the community access credit, finance and loans enable individuals and businesses to meet every day needs efficiently, increase financial power and flexibility, and purchase productive resources to help speed up economic growth. In addition to broadening access to credit, strategies could include providing guidance on responsible borrowing, personal and business financial planning, and allocating surge capital resources in case of a disaster.

## PREPARE FOR THE LONG TERM

Economic resilience in Loíza is intrinsically linked to climate resilience and social capital.

- Establish realistic assessments of what the planning team can accomplish
- Begin with people-based strategies aimed at education and youth, and business-focused strategies that identify and develop assets that the Municipality currently has
- Devise low-investment, creative approaches to site development, such as dune and wetland restoration, selective elevation and relocation of structures, and ways to continue to tolerate flooding
- Foster economic security programs that improve the lives of vulnerable families and individuals experiencing poverty
- Support workforce training in growing industry sectors on the Island
- Foster collaboration by embracing local ideas and community projects

While CDBG recovery and mitigation funds will bring about the largest community planning budget in the history of Puerto Rico, there is endless work to be done in Loíza, and limited manpower in its Planning Department. It will be no easy task for planners to be assertive on

where to begin, but it may be the most critical step in their strategy. The team ought to make surgical interventions, starting with the most urgent needs. Establishing realistic assessments of the amount of work, time, and resources that the team can afford to dedicate to planning efforts is essential in order to determine the few matters that are most deficient and that would create the most impact for the most people. Focusing the Municipality's energy on solving those to the best of their abilities will generate momentum in the community.

Based on our exchanges with the Municipality and community leadership, a variety of strategies aimed at education and youth, as well as identifying and developing assets the Municipality currently has, could be a good place to start in their path towards economic development. Nonetheless, several other issues impacting economic development in the community should also be considered when analyzing potential gain from choosing one matter over another: natural hazard mitigation, public infrastructure and services, safe housing and land tenure, financial and business planning, etc. While each one of these could bring about its own set of strategies, the overarching theme should be a collective vision for resilience that integrates planning aspects that could not afford to be prioritized in the first phase of implementation.

Public safety concerns, for instance, could be integrated into youth and economic security strategies. Loíza's crime rate not only poses a glaring threat to the quality of life in the community, but it can have an amplified effect on attracting visitors' dollars. Safety is an important part of the public image of a tourist destination, and it can make or break a tourism economy. A variety of strategies to create a socially safe environment in Loíza's could include economic security programs that improve the lives of vulnerable families and individuals experiencing poverty, as well as initiatives aimed at education and keeping the youth engaged in activities that contribute towards a holistic growth. Investments in children, youth, and entrepreneurs are "portable," and emphasizing on these approaches will enable Loiceños to have greater adaptive capacity even if they must relocate.

Building a resilient workforce that can better shift between jobs or industries could include initiatives and incentives such as mentorship programs, educational scholarships, etc., targeted at

growing trades or careers on the Island. A systematic approach based on industry data projections in Puerto Rico can make a small educational investment go a long way, and result in on-Island opportunities that secure the future workforce is able to access a job, as well as to support growing sectors.

Fostering collaboration and coordination is fundamental to the larger goals of building capacity and strengthening social capital. Social capital is made of the networks of relationships among people who live and work in the community, which create a sense of ownership and enable the community to function effectively. Strategies aimed at building social capital could support efforts to build collective bargaining power through cooperation—e.g., helping fishermen organize so they can expand into markets that will pay them better for their catch, or helping tourism businesses coordinate to offer packages of services together. If suitable, strategies could consider introducing the cooperative model of social enterprise to industry clusters, to help this type of collective efforts expand their business and training.

Ideas for projects that foster collaboration and coordination already exist in the community, as evidenced in the 2018 strategic plan Jóvenes de Loíza. The plan presents a series of opportunities that the community has identified, including proposals for officially declaring Loíza a culinary destination, repurposing discontinued industrial uses, and cultivating currently-vacant lots owned by the Municipality (Fundación Comunitaria 2016, 27-36). Likewise, the Caño Martín Peña Land Trust is an outstanding example of just how much can be achieved through collaboration and coordination around the topic of land tenure. Embracing some of these projects, especially those that involve little capital investment, could be a great starting point for the Planning Department to spark partnerships and collaboration amongst the residents.

Because climate change is an imminent danger to the majority of Loíza's territory, we must acknowledge that relocation is on the horizon, and plan accordingly. Collaboration and social capital will make it easier for industry partnerships to—eventually—survive relocation. Often, activities that foster community cohesiveness are associated with the location where they take place, but planning for resilience goes a step further in thinking how activities in Loíza and their

capacity will eventually need to move elsewhere. For example, establishing a community kitchen could be a catalyst that creates the cohesion among interests and relationships that already exist in the community; but in the event of a disaster that destroys the facilities, resilience planning can help prepare for that cohesion to survive and relocate. In this area, the Municipality can capitalize on the community organization that is already taking place in Loíza, through the work of institutions and leaders, and the many avenues to reach the community digitally, such as the more-than-a-dozen social-media pages established by residents of Loíza.

The Economic Development team must clearly communicate to stakeholders that actions that build resilience are good for the local economy, whether or not a natural or economic shock occurs. Building resilience involves making people and institutions stronger so that even when not living full time in the territory of Loíza, they can thrive and help others who are in or from the territory thrive too. Achieving economic resilience requires anticipating risk and gauging how it can impact economic assets, so that the community can prepare their responsive capacity. Because coastal storms are a paramount risk to Loíza, climate resilience goes hand-in-hand with economic development. Therefore, planners and stakeholders will have to think creatively about economic resilience and resilience to coastal storms. Low-investment but still imaginative approaches to site development could help the community meet its goals. This might involve a variety of strategies, such as dune and wetland restoration, selective elevation or relocation of structures within the Municipality, and ways to continue to tolerate occasional flooding in some locations. To the Municipality's advantage, many existing documents have already begun exploring some of these strategies, including those listed on Table 1a.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The many planning efforts and resources that already exist in Loíza and Puerto Rico were a pleasant surprise to find, and they can serve as a strong foundation for reference of the Planning Department. The Municipality will need to create a plan that is achievable and works for them, that is based on the needs of households and businesses in their community. They should have their own positions and approach in mind, and then fit it into the government-mandated frameworks. This will enable them to have plans that not only meet the government's bureaucratic requirements, but that also articulate Loíza's needs in their own terms. A fitting long-term approach for Loíza would be an overarching resilience strategy that addresses coastal storms and economic development, by providing the framework for implementation-oriented mitigation and recovery plans. A strategy like such can have the potential to be specific enough to address the most pressing matters, and comprehensive enough to recognize blind spots. A three-to-five-year planning approach is likely to yield sensible and timely results, and provide adaptability to adjust course as needed in Loíza's fast-changing conditions. Building resilience involves making people and institutions stronger so that even when not living full time in the territory of Loíza, they can thrive and help others who are in or from the territory thrive too.

Mitigation and resilience efforts must indisputably drive the planning conversation in Loíza as pivotal factors to the survival of the community. Notably, the *City Resilience Framework* and *Reimagina Puerto Rico* would be excellent conceptual models for Loíza to follow. They can help the Municipality diagnose strengths and weaknesses in their resilience efforts, and adopt relevant strategies based on findings on the most outstanding needs of the people of Puerto Rico.

Economic development—which the Planning Department has identified as a leading planning priority—might involve a variety of strategies aimed at youth and education, entrepreneurship, climate resilience, as well as identifying and developing social capital and assets that the Municipality currently has.

Governance will be critical for the Municipality to guide planning efforts in a clear direction, to make progress towards its objectives, and to maintain ethical standing in the eyes of the community. Establishing a system of checks and balances enables institutions to develop stability and stay on track—and ahead of mismanagement. The commitment to the betterment of Loíza that local planners and community leaders conveyed in the interviews that informed this study is praiseworthy. Strong engagement with the community that we serve helps us act in their best interest, and allows us to gauge their diversity of skills and talents for a more fruitful participation. A planning process based on neighborhood engagement in Loíza will help foster stewardship of a collective vision and a clear set of actions towards economic and climate resilience.

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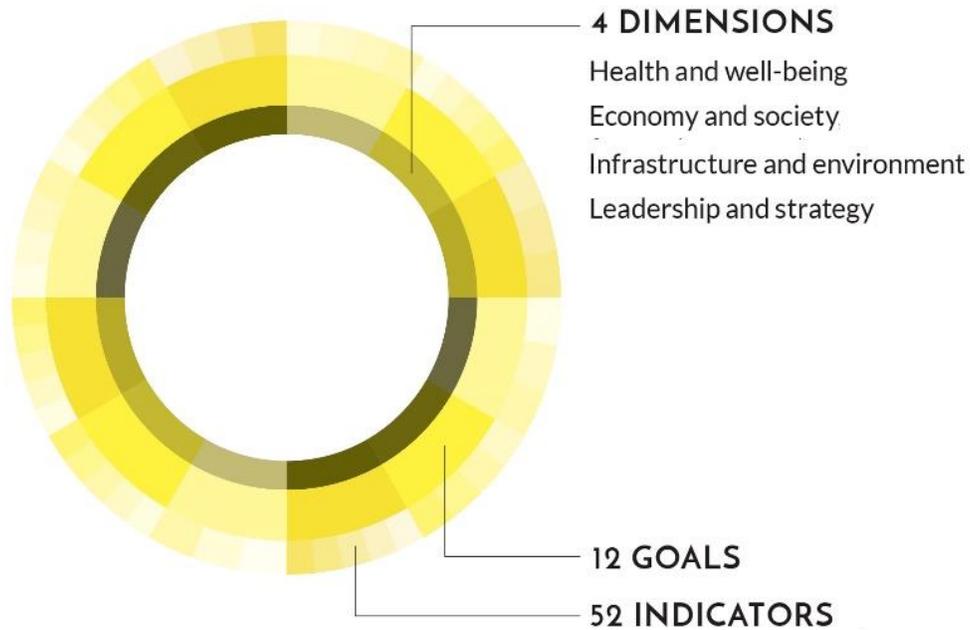
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# APPENDIX

## CITY RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

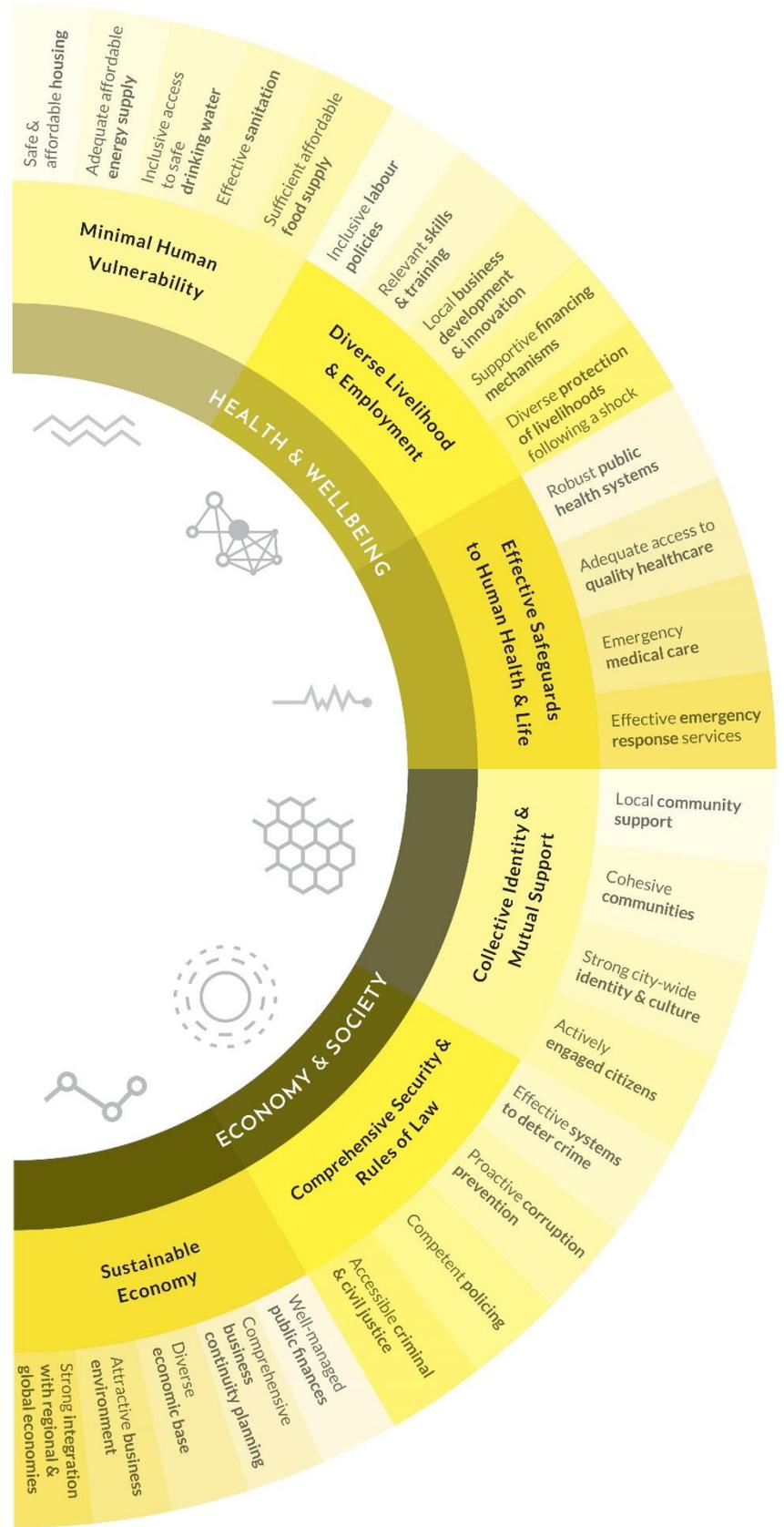
Arup + Rockefeller Foundation, 2015

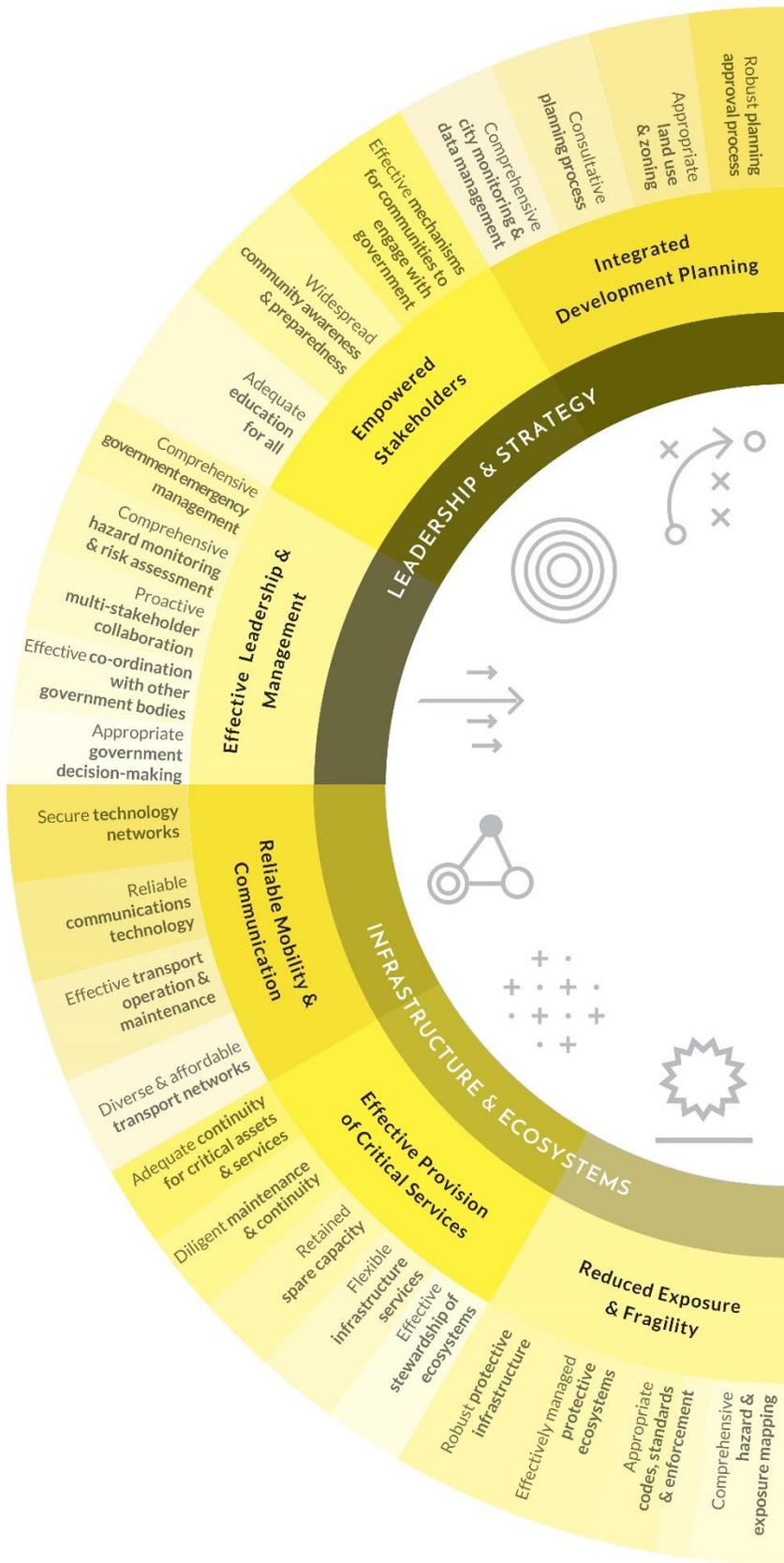
The City Resilience Framework provides a holistic, evidence-based articulation of urban resilience, and how it can be achieved by focusing on four dimensions. The framework introduces fundamental goals for each dimension, and presents indicators designed to enable urban systems to measure and monitor the multiple factors that contribute to their resilience. The primary audience for this tool is municipal governments, but it is also intended to support dialogue between other stakeholders who contribute to building resilience.



Health and Wellbeing considers the extent to which a community enables everyone to meet their basic needs (food, water, and shelter), particularly in times of crisis. It considers if a city is able to safeguard the health of its population through its normal and emergency healthcare provisions. It also considers how well the community supports diverse livelihood opportunities, including access to business investment and social welfare.

Economy and Society relates to the organization of cities—how social and economic systems enable urban populations to live peacefully, and act collectively. Included within this dimension are the systems that enforce law and order and ensure fiscal management. The environment within a city that creates collective identity and mutual support also play an important role—open spaces and cultural heritage.





Leadership and Strategy focuses on the knowledge that guides suitable actions. A city must have effective leadership and urban management, characterized by inclusive governance involving the government, business and civil society, and evidence-based decision-making. A city must also empower its stakeholders by providing access to information and education, so that individuals and organizations can take appropriate actions. It is equally important to ensure that the city develops in an integrated way that aligns the city's vision with sectoral strategies and plans, and individual projects.

Infrastructure and Ecosystems relates to their quality, and how they protect, provide, and connect us. The continuity of critical services, under shock or stress situations are also important within this dimension. In particular, water supply, power distribution, and solid waste management; the transportation systems that enable the flow of goods, services, people, and information.

## REIMAGINA PUERTO RICO

Resilient Puerto Rico Advisory Commission + Rockefeller Foundation

Following the catastrophic events caused by Hurricanes Irma and María in September 2017, the Resilient Puerto Rico Advisory Commission developed their core project, Reimagina Puerto Rico. They recognized that returning the Island to its prior state should not be the goal, but that reconstruction and recovery investments ought to be leveraged to change its growth and development trajectory. The recovery process should not focus only on replacing outdated infrastructure. Instead, it should aim at building better assets, unleashing innovation, and coordinating among interested stakeholders. Creating these conditions would pave the path to address multiple challenges, increase social cohesion, strengthen the economy, and eliminate existing underlying socioeconomic weaknesses.

The plan is a resilience strategy developed for Puerto Rico, based on the Rockefeller Foundation's City Resilience Framework, FEMA's National Recovery Framework, and extensive citizen input. It contextualizes salient shocks and stresses affecting the citizens of Puerto Rico, and identifies six sectors of priority: housing; energy; physical infrastructure; health, education, and social services; economic development; and natural infrastructure. Each sector produced a report that includes background, context, and specific actionable recommendations. There are a total of 97 actionable recommendations that would be an outstanding starting point for Loíza to pick the most relevant to assemble their own plan. The economic development actionable recommendations are shown in the next page.



Craft a diversified portfolio of economic activities that augment Puerto Rico’s resiliency by enhancing existing capabilities, improving employment prospects, and reducing inequalities.

- A1** | Develop and implement a disaster resilience strategy for the micro and small businesses of Puerto Rico.
- A2** | Promote the adoption of best practices in enterprise risk management and business continuity planning for mid-sized companies.
- A3** | Leverage Hurricane María reconstruction investments to advance the construction sector's recovery, innovation, and resilience.
- A4** | Ensure that reconstruction-related procurements give priority to local workforce employment, training, and certification.
- A5** | Prioritize Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding for training, re-training, and skills credentialing within priority industry clusters.
- A6** | Develop on-Island employment/career opportunities for both Puerto Rican youth and for aging members of the workforce, ensuring the quantity and quality of the future workforce is able to support growth in prioritized economic sectors/clusters.
- A7** | Support and communicate clear pathways for Puerto Rico’s youth and young adults to establish businesses, social enterprises, and professional services careers in Puerto Rico’s Next Generation Economy.
- A8** | Support social service programs that reduce family and child poverty to ensure the readiness of the future workforce.
- A9** | Strengthen broad-based, community-level economic development initiatives, building and strengthening Puerto Rico’s community economic development organizations and their networks through sustained, collective investments from the Puerto Rican diaspora associations, foundations, and crowd-sourcing activities.
- A10** | Develop and implement specific industry cluster strategies for economic sectors that are key to the resilience of Puerto Rican society, such as housing, power supply, health services and medicine, food, global supply chain, knowledge economy, and education. Expand the organizational capacity as part of economic development efforts focused on these sectors and the resilience of mid-sized companies.
- A11** | Review existing laws and regulations and simplify the permitting and licensing processes that are required to open a business, without compromising human or environmental capital, and attracting new investment.
- A12** | Optimize the use of and improve fiscal stewardship of subsidies awarded to create quality jobs and stimulate economic activity.

## LOS ALAMOS TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN

Design Workshop. 2018

In 2019, this plan received the American Planning Association's National Achievement Award for Economic Development Planning. Los Alamos County has a population of comparable size to Loíza, and their tourism is predominantly domestic, for which this may be good example of similar scale to reference.

The plan begins with an in-depth market study, documenting community context, and tourism trends at national, state, and regional scale. It identifies existing assets in the county, and potential issues and opportunities to diversify their tourism economy. These data drive the strategic direction of the plan into four focus areas related to marketing, visitor spending, attractions, and leadership. Goals and strategies are arranged into a recommended implementation action plan that provides near-term action items (0-3 years), and indicators to track their relative progress. Additionally, the plan identifies priority action items to be addressed immediately, to build interest and momentum in the community.