

The Virgin Islands Consortium

First Resiliency Workshop Held In St. Thomas. The Advisory Committee Hopes To Inform The Rebuilding Of The Territory Following Irma And Maria.

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp's Hurricane Recovery Advisory Committee held its first resiliency and sustainability workshop on Monday as part of the Mr. Mapp's mission to build back the U.S. Virgin Islands in a stronger, smarter and more environmentally friendly manner, Government House said early Tuesday.

"These workshops will ensure we integrate resiliency, sustainability and best practices at every step along the way," said the governor.

Dina Leroy, head of the Hurricane Recovery Advisory Committee and an advisor to the governor, said that more workshops are planned in the coming months on St. Croix and St. John. “Because each island has different needs, getting local input will help us build back the right way for each community,” Ms. Leroy said.

“There is a great opportunity to rebuild the USVI in a more sustainable way that not only decreases vulnerability to future storms, but also reduces energy costs and protects the territory’s natural resources,” said Adam Freed of Bloomberg Associates, a philanthropic consulting firm that offers pro bono assistance to cities around the world.

Meaghan Enright of the Love for Love City Foundation said the workshop provided an important opportunity to examine the “unique and intricate system that is the USVI,” adding, “we can then identify gaps within that system and address those gaps to build a better, more resilient territory moving forward.”

The full contingent of the Hurricane Recovery Advisory Committee is scheduled to hold its second meeting on Tuesday. The committee is assisting the Mapp-Potter Administration’s efforts to guide the territory’s short- and long-term recovery following September’s Category 5 hurricanes.

The committee comprises local officials and community leaders, as well as resiliency, housing, environmental and other experts from around the country, according to Government House. The Advisory Committee is performing a quantitative assessment of the damage from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The group is also outlining potential future natural hazards, including how the risks may evolve with a changing climate.

The workshop, held on St. Thomas, included participants from local government agencies, including Eugene Farrell, Mr. Mapp’s chief of staff; Dept. of Health Commissioner Michelle Davis; West Indian Company CEO and President Clifford Graham; and representatives from the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA), the VI Port Authority, and various government departments, including Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. of Human Services, Dept. of Labor, Housing Authority, Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources, and the Public Finance Authority. Community and philanthropic groups also attended, including the St. John Community Foundation, Love City Strong and Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Anyone interested in attending future workshops can contact the committee at USVIHurricaneResiliency@gmail.com for more information.