

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## USVI Hurricane Recovery And Resilience Task Force Releases Final Report

Disaster Recovery / **Published On September 07, 2018 11:42 AM /**

Staff **September 07, 2018**



The U.S. Virgin Islands Hurricane Recovery and Resilience Task Force on Thursday published its revised, final 273-page report to help guide reconstruction and resilience efforts in the territory in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. According to the release, topics addressed in the report include government response to the storms, as well as recommendations for recovery and future resilience in: Energy; climate risks; telecommunications; transportation; water; solid waste and wastewater; housing and buildings; health; vulnerable populations; education; economy; nonprofit, philanthropy and voluntary organizations.

The report includes 228 initiatives related to the USVI's continuing recovery and focused on improving long-term security and economic growth, with a special focus on critical infrastructure, public services, and increasing businesses' resilience in future storms and other natural disasters. The recommendations—many of which are already in the process of implementation—generally fall into four major strategy groups: harden infrastructure; reconfigure systems; change governance and regulation; and improve planning, coordination and preparation.

"I want to thank all of the Members of the task force who worked tirelessly to create this strategy and pathway to a resilient recovery. We are implementing these initiatives as we work with our federal partners and technical teams of both the Bloomberg and Clinton Foundations. The progress in the VI's recovery thus far has been remarkable because all of us, public sector, private sector, non-profit community and philanthropy joined forces on one objective; the rebirth of a stronger and better US Virgin Islands. I thank you all," said Governor Kenneth Mapp.

According to the release, the majority of the recommendations outlined in the report will be paid for with federal recovery funding. The two major sources are Community Development Block Grants for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and various funds from FEMA. As of June 2018, the USVI is expecting \$1.86 billion in HUD money (\$1.09 billion for unmet needs and \$0.77 billion for mitigation) and \$2.47 billion in FEMA money. Implementation of the report will be led by a separate office. This office will release annual progress reports discussing updates and forward momentum on the implementation of initiatives in this report through 2021.

Following a 10-day public comment period when the report was released online and in printed book form from July 20 through July 30, 2018, the Task Force underwent a month of editing to implement community feedback and comments, the release said. In total, the Task Force collated over 500 comments from more than 100 readers throughout the Territory. Suggestions came from individuals, local government agencies and organizations, and federal partners. The final report incorporates over 1,000 changes in content and design, in addition to integrating comments and updates. The public comment period ensured that the Task Force's comprehensive recovery recommendations continue to be a community-centered effort.

"We received wonderful, thoughtful feedback that guided our revisions" Dina Simon, CEO of the Task Force said. "This report provides a foundation for the long-term effort to strengthen the US Virgin Islands for many years to come."

The final report can be accessed at [here](#). Hard copies will be available beginning the week of September 17 on St. John at the St. John Community Foundation and Long Term Recovery Offices Suites 201, 203, 205 at the St. John Marketplace, Third Floor; on St. Croix at Florence A. Williams Public Library; on St. Thomas at Charles W. Turnbull Regional Library; and at the Administrator's Offices on all three islands, according to the release.

In October 2017, the governor called for the Task Force to perform a qualitative and quantitative assessment of damage sustained from the September 2017 hurricanes and to outline risks facing the Territory from potential future natural hazards, including risks

posed by climate change. The Task Force also assessed hurricane damage and outlined risks facing the USVI from potential future natural hazards looking ahead 30 years, including how climate science predicts those risks may evolve.

The Task Force was made up of local and federal government agency representatives, local officials, business and community members, as well as subject matter experts and thought leaders in business, economy and environmental science from around the United States. Members of the Task Force Advisory Committee volunteered their time and expertise to contribute to the recommendations. In addition to the feedback from public comment period during the initial draft release, the report was also influenced by more than 500 community members who participated in five community meetings across St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas, as well as two resilience workshops and many other special interest group meetings focused on housing and the economy.

President and CEO of the West Indian Company (WICO), Clifford Graham, led the Task Force Advisory Committee as Chairman, along with Task Force CEO Dina Simon, who previously served as a senior advisor to the Governor. Task Force activities were funded by a grant administered by the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI).