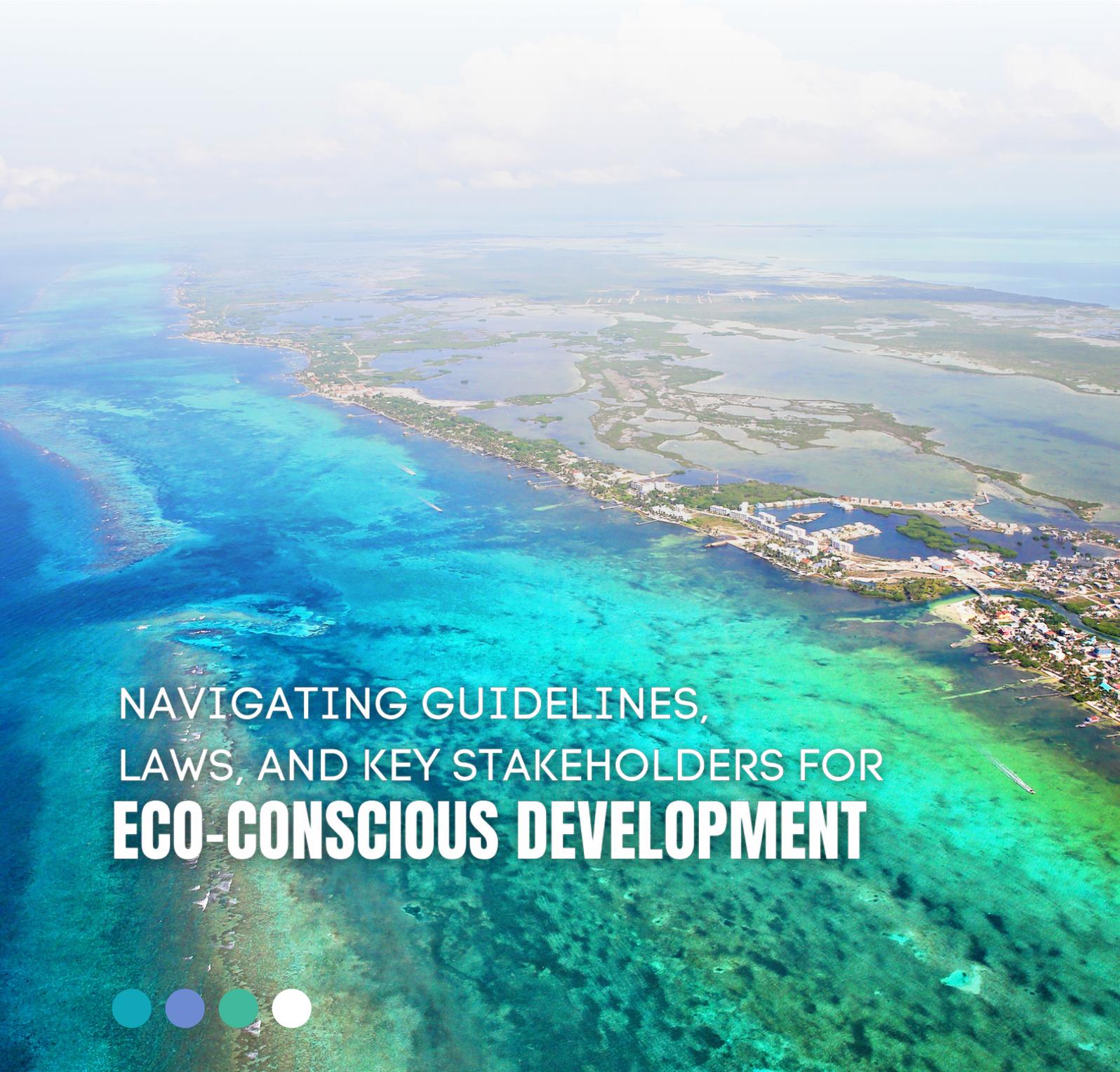


# Sustainable Real Estate, Infrastructure, and Tourism in Belize



NAVIGATING GUIDELINES,  
LAWS, AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS FOR  
**ECO-CONSCIOUS DEVELOPMENT**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Belize, renowned for its extraordinary biodiversity, vibrant cultural heritage, and pristine natural beauty, finds itself at a pivotal moment in its development trajectory. The country's economy is deeply reliant on three major sectors: real estate, infrastructure, and tourism, all of which must adapt to sustainable practices to safeguard Belize's ecological and cultural treasures. With climate change posing increasing threats, and the growing pressures of development, Belize faces the challenge of aligning economic growth with environmental protection, ensuring that its path forward is sustainable, inclusive, and resilient.

The tourism industry, which contributes approximately 11.8% to Belize's GDP and provides around 25,000 jobs, is central to the economy but also presents risks of environmental degradation due to over-development. Belize's unique ecosystems, including the Belize Barrier Reef, mangrove forests, and expansive rainforests, are critical not only for the economy but also for global environmental health. These natural assets serve as the foundation for eco-tourism, which has positioned Belize as a premier destination for travelers seeking nature-based and sustainable experiences. However, these assets are under growing strain from climate change, increased visitation, and foreign investment, which makes careful management and sustainable planning essential.

To address these challenges, Belize has put in place several strategic frameworks that promote sustainability across its key sectors. Chief among these is the National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (NSTMP) and the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS). The NSTMP, adopted in 2011, sets out a comprehensive roadmap to establish Belize as a globally recognized tourism destination by 2030, with sustainability as the cornerstone of all tourism development. The plan emphasizes preserving the environmental integrity of Belize's destinations while fostering economic growth, ensuring that tourism benefits both the environment and local communities.

Complementing this is the GSDS (2016-2020), which integrates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into Belize's national development agenda. The GSDS sets out clear objectives for economic growth, poverty eradication, and environmental protection, recognizing the interconnected nature of these goals. Through its four Critical Success Factors (CSFs), the GSDS outlines a path to improve national income, ensure social inclusion, protect natural and cultural heritage, and enhance governance. This strategy positions Belize as a global leader in sustainable development, aligning its national priorities with international standards.

Belize's legal framework supports sustainable development in real estate, infrastructure, and tourism. The Land Utilization Act regulates zoning to prevent overdevelopment in sensitive areas. The Environmental Protection Act (EPA) requires Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for major projects, especially in vulnerable ecosystems, ensuring environmental risks are managed. With Belize's exposure to hurricanes and flooding, EIAs are crucial for resilient development. The Belize Building Act enforces construction codes that prioritize energy efficiency and renewable energy, promoting eco-friendly construction and positioning Belize as a leader in sustainable development in the Caribbean.

Sustainable development in Belize is a collaborative effort that requires the active involvement of various stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, international partners, and the private sector. Key government entities like the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) and the Ministry of Natural Resources play crucial roles in promoting sustainability through

policy formulation and enforcement. The BTB aligns tourism growth with environmental policies, ensuring that Belize remains a leading eco-tourism destination, while the Ministry of Natural Resources manages land allocation and environmental protection, balancing economic development with ecosystem conservation. NGOs and international conservation organizations, such as the Belize Audubon Society, Oceana Belize, and WWF, support these efforts by advocating for sustainable practices, monitoring environmental impacts, and engaging local communities in conservation initiatives. These partnerships bring valuable global expertise and funding to Belize's sustainability projects. Meanwhile, the private sector, particularly real estate developers and tourism operators, has increasingly embraced sustainable practices, recognizing their long-term financial and environmental benefits. Green infrastructure and eco-conscious tourism services, such as eco-resorts and real estate projects incorporating renewable energy and water conservation technologies, are becoming more prominent as developers and investors prioritize projects that protect the environment while enhancing the value of Belize's tourism and real estate sectors.

Despite the progress Belize has made in promoting sustainable practices, several challenges persist, particularly in enforcing its regulatory frameworks. While comprehensive laws and guidelines are in place, limited resources within governmental agencies hinder effective enforcement, leading to regulatory non-compliance and environmental degradation. This challenge is compounded by the tension between economic growth and environmental preservation, as rising foreign investment in Belize's real estate and tourism sectors increases the risk of over-development, especially in ecologically sensitive coastal zones and near the Belize Barrier Reef. Unchecked development in these areas could cause irreversible environmental damage, highlighting the need for careful management and long-term planning to balance economic growth with the protection of Belize's natural resources.

Belize's commitment to sustainability unlocks significant opportunities for economic growth and environmental leadership, even in the face of existing challenges. One of the most promising areas is green infrastructure investment, particularly in renewable energy, water conservation, and climate-resilient construction. By fostering a supportive environment for such initiatives, Belize can attract impact investors and businesses focused on sustainability, thereby boosting both its economic resilience and its reputation as an eco-friendly destination. Additionally, the adoption of international sustainability certifications like Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or EDGE certification can further elevate Belize's global standing. These certifications serve as benchmarks for sustainable building practices, encouraging developers to adopt higher environmental standards, positioning Belize as a leader in sustainable tourism and real estate development in the Caribbean.

Achieving sustainable development in Belize is a complex but rewarding endeavor that calls for collective efforts from the government, NGOs, international partners, and the private sector. Leveraging the country's natural assets, implementing strong regulatory frameworks, and fostering cross-sector collaboration can position Belize as a regional leader in sustainability. However, to fully realize this potential, strengthening enforcement mechanisms, investing in green infrastructure, and embedding sustainable practices across all sectors remain crucial. With strategic planning and innovative solutions, the country can become a globally recognized leader in sustainable tourism and real estate while preserving its environment and enhancing its citizens' quality of life. Navigating these challenges and opportunities, Belize's commitment to environmental stewardship and economic resilience will be key to ensuring a prosperous and sustainable future.



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# INTRODUCTION

Belize, a country renowned for its rich biodiversity, unique ecosystems, and vibrant cultural heritage, stands at a crossroads where sustainable development has transitioned from a strategic choice to a pressing necessity. With its economic framework heavily dependent on real estate, infrastructure, and tourism, Belize must navigate the challenges and opportunities of aligning these sectors with sustainable principles. The tourism industry alone contributes approximately 11.8% of GDP and 25,000 jobs underscoring its significance to the national economy. However, with climate change intensifying, Belize's ecosystems face an unprecedented strain, highlighting the need for comprehensive and actionable sustainable development strategies.

A primary attraction for tourists and a linchpin for Belize's economy is the Belize Barrier Reef, a UNESCO World Heritage site, along with the country's mangrove forests, diverse marine life, and expansive tropical rainforests. These natural resources not only drive eco-tourism but also provide essential services such as coastal protection and carbon sequestration. However, the very success of the tourism industry poses challenges; with growth comes the risk of environmental degradation. To preserve its natural resources and maintain its status as a premier eco-tourism destination, Belize must adopt forward-looking policies and sustainable practices that address environmental impact, infrastructure development, and real estate growth.

To tackle these multifaceted challenges, Belize has developed a series of frameworks designed to promote sustainable practices across tourism, infrastructure, and real estate sectors. Among the most significant of these frameworks is the National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (NSTMP), endorsed in 2011, which outlines a vision to establish Belize as a globally recognized tourism destination by 2030. This plan emphasizes sustainability and quality assurance in tourism development, aiming to protect the environmental integrity of Belize's destinations while fostering economic growth. Additionally, the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) for 2016-2020 integrates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into Belize's national policy, with a particular emphasis on areas such as energy, environment, and migration. Through this integration, Belize is aligning its national priorities with global standards, creating a pathway to sustainable development that is both locally rooted and internationally relevant.

To implement sustainable practices in real estate and infrastructure, Belize has established a robust regulatory framework like Land Utilization Act etc., which governs land use and zoning, delineating land into categories such as residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial zones. These regulations are instrumental in guiding sustainable land use, especially as development pressure increases with rising foreign investment in Belize's real estate sector.

Furthermore, the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) mandates Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for all significant development projects, particularly those located near vulnerable ecosystems. EIAs serve as a vital tool for assessing potential environmental risks and identifying mitigation strategies before projects are approved. Given Belize's geographic vulnerability to hurricanes, flooding, and coastal erosion, these assessments are critical for ensuring that infrastructure and real estate projects are designed with resilience in mind. The integration of building codes that mandate energy-efficient materials and renewable energy sources further supports Belize's commitment to sustainable construction, positioning the country as a leader in eco-friendly development

practices in the Caribbean region.

The pursuit of sustainability in Belize is a collaborative endeavor involving numerous stakeholders across governmental, non-governmental, and private sectors. Governmental bodies, such as the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) and the Ministry of Natural Resources, play crucial roles in policy formulation, enforcement, and oversight. The BTB, for instance, is instrumental in promoting sustainable tourism practices and aligning Belize's tourism growth with national environmental policies. The Ministry of Natural Resources, on the other hand, oversees land allocation, environmental protection, and resource management, working to balance the competing interests of economic development and environmental stewardship. Together, these governmental entities ensure that Belize's regulatory framework remains robust and adaptable in the face of evolving environmental and economic challenges.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international conservation groups also play a significant role in Belize's sustainability landscape. The Belize Audubon Society, Oceana Belize, and other local environmental NGOs are actively involved in conservation initiatives, policy advocacy, and community engagement, particularly in areas related to marine and coastal protection. These organizations work closely with the government to monitor environmental impacts, promote sustainable practices, and educate the public about the importance of preserving Belize's natural resources. International partners, such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), bring additional expertise, funding, and global perspectives to these efforts, enabling Belize to benefit from a diverse array of resources and insights. By leveraging these partnerships, Belize is better equipped to address complex environmental issues and promote sustainable practices across its key economic sectors.

The private sector, including real estate developers and tourism operators, has increasingly recognized the value of sustainable practices. In recent years, there has been a shift toward green construction, renewable energy integration, and eco-conscious tourism services. Many developers now prioritize projects that align with sustainability principles, understanding that these projects are not only environmentally responsible but also financially beneficial in the long term. For instance, eco-resorts that minimize environmental impact attract a growing segment of eco-conscious travelers, thereby enhancing the value and appeal of Belize's tourism industry. Similarly, real estate projects that incorporate green infrastructure, such as rainwater harvesting systems and solar energy, appeal to investors looking to support sustainable and resilient developments. This alignment of economic interests with environmental priorities illustrates the potential for Belize to serve as a model for sustainable development in the Caribbean and beyond.

Despite the progress made, Belize faces significant challenges in fully realizing its sustainable development goals. One of the most pressing issues is the gap between regulatory frameworks and enforcement. While Belize has established comprehensive laws and guidelines for sustainable development, ensuring compliance across all sectors remains challenging. Limited resources and capacity within governmental agencies can hinder effective enforcement, leading to instances of regulatory non-compliance and environmental degradation. Furthermore, balancing the demands of economic growth with environmental preservation is an ongoing challenge. As foreign investment in real estate and tourism increases, so does the risk of over-development in ecologically sensitive areas. This tension between development and conservation underscores the need for carefully managed growth that respects Belize's environmental limits while fostering economic opportunity.

In the face of these challenges, Belize's commitment to sustainability opens new opportunities for economic growth and environmental leadership. The potential for green infrastructure investments is significant, particularly in areas such as renewable energy, water conservation, and climate-resilient construction. By fostering a supportive environment for green investments, Belize can attract impact investors and businesses that prioritize sustainability, enhancing both its economic resilience and its reputation as an eco-friendly destination. Additionally, the adoption of international sustainability certifications, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or EDGE certification for buildings, can further strengthen Belize's appeal to environmentally conscious investors and developers. These certifications serve as a benchmark for sustainable building practices, encouraging the real estate and construction sectors to adopt higher standards of environmental responsibility.



This white paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the sustainable real estate, infrastructure, and tourism sectors in Belize. It will examine the guidelines, laws, and codes that govern these areas, offering a detailed overview of the regulatory landscape and the key players involved in promoting sustainability. By mapping the contributions of governmental agencies, NGOs, international partners, and private sector stakeholders, this paper seeks to highlight the collaborative efforts that underpin Belize's sustainable development. Furthermore, it will identify the challenges that Belize faces in implementing sustainable practices, from regulatory gaps to climate risks, while exploring the innovative solutions and investment opportunities that can drive future progress. Through this analysis, the white paper aims to inform policymakers, investors, and stakeholders who are committed to advancing sustainability in Belize, offering insights into the strategies that can enhance the country's resilience, economic prosperity, and environmental integrity.

# BELIZE'S GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (GSDS)

Belize's Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) aims to address critical areas for development through an integrated, systemic approach, designed to realize the vision outlined in Horizon 2030. The overarching goal of the GSDS is to enhance the quality of life for all Belizeans, focusing on sustainable development principles that balance economic growth, poverty eradication, social cohesion, and environmental protection. This goal aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reflecting Belize's role as a pilot country within the UN framework since 2013. Through the GSDS, Belize commits to long-term development across four Critical Success Factors (CSFs), which provide a framework for policies, programs, and actions. Each CSF aligns with specific Necessary Conditions (NCs) that guide initiatives for measurable progress by 2019 and beyond.

Belize's CSF1, Optimal National Income and Investment, seeks to achieve an annual real output growth of 5% over the long term. This growth target anticipates a 33% rise in per capita income over ten years, assuming 2% population growth. However, reaching this 5% growth immediately is unlikely; hence, the 2016-2019 GSDS period will prioritize economic reforms, including productivity enhancement, market intelligence improvements, and FDI attraction. For export market penetration (NC1.1), the government aims for at least 3% annual growth in non-traditional exports and tourism, progressing toward a 5% growth rate in exports. This growth relies on expanding market access through Partial Scope Agreements with Guatemala, Mexico, and El Salvador. Additionally, efforts to boost standards compliance and technical readiness for export will be bolstered by BELTRAIDE and the Ministry of Agriculture through market intelligence and support services for enterprises.

The GSDS places high importance on inclusive growth and social mobility under CSF2. Belize aims to eradicate poverty by 2030, improve income distribution, and reduce the homicide rate to below 10 per 100,000 inhabitants. Access to healthcare and education is essential, with a focus on providing universal basic and early childhood education and maintaining or improving the life expectancy of 74 years. These goals necessitate equitable income distribution and labor market improvements, with policies supporting wages and working conditions aligned to lift Belizeans out of poverty. Notably, strategies to combat poverty and ensure resilience emphasize community-driven development and livelihood programs in coastal and rural areas, addressing social fragmentation and crime reduction to foster a cohesive society.

CSF3 underscores Belize's commitment to maintaining its natural and cultural heritage through environmental stewardship. The GSDS highlights the economic and social value of Belize's natural assets, essential for tourism, food security, and national identity. Sustainable environmental management is critical, encompassing climate change resilience, disaster risk management, and waste and pollution control. For example, water resource management and the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan are integral to maintaining ecosystem services, while the National Land Use Policy and Protected Areas System enhance biodiversity conservation. This CSF aligns with international environmental obligations, such as those under UNFCCC and CARICOM.

Governance reforms under CSF4 address public sector efficiency and citizen security. By improving public financial management, reducing waste and abuse, and enhancing policing and justice systems, Belize aims to create a governance model that respects human rights and reinforces the rule of law. Key to this CSF is engaged governance, which

seeks to incorporate citizen input into policymaking, thereby improving social outcomes and bolstering confidence in public institutions.

The implementation of the GSDS, coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Development (MED), involves a multi-tiered institutional framework, including inter-ministerial Technical Committees and oversight by the CEO Caucus. The Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) will lead Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) efforts, gathering data for key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to the CSFs and NCs. Resource mobilization for the GSDS involves budget allocation, human resource development, and capacity building to support priority actions. Budget constraints demand a Prioritization Framework for strategic allocation, based on urgency, impact, resource availability, and systemic contribution.

Resource constraints necessitate prioritizing foundational infrastructure projects in water, sewerage, and connectivity. Macroeconomic stability and enhanced institutional performance remain central to the GSDS, especially in achieving Stage 1 competitiveness in factor-driven sectors. Emphasis on efficiency-driven economic transition will support Stage 2 development, where improved institutional performance and citizen security contribute to an environment conducive to investment.

Flagship actions for immediate prioritization include developing sectoral policies to improve export readiness, support sustainable tourism, and advance climate resilience. Actions supporting human capital development target education alignment with labor market needs, expanding vocational and technical skills training, and encouraging entrepreneurship. Infrastructure projects under the National Transportation Master Plan include road and port upgrades, while energy sector investment will focus on renewable energy to reduce carbon dependency.

For social resilience, Belize's health initiatives target improved nutrition, healthcare access, and social protection efficiency. These programs address livelihood support and community development, contributing to social stability and enhanced economic productivity. Environmental goals prioritize sustainable forestry, water management, and pollution control, with emphasis on disaster risk reduction and ecosystem preservation. By maintaining the integrity of coastal zones and protected areas, Belize aims to safeguard resources essential to tourism and local livelihoods.

Governance reforms will adopt program budgeting and public finance improvements to achieve fiscal efficiency. Additionally, law enforcement resources, including CCTV deployment, will be enhanced for improved public safety. In totality, these strategies aim to create a sustainable and resilient socio-economic environment by aligning policy with Belize's development goals.

The GSDS provides a living document framework for Belize's sustainable growth and will adapt over time to meet evolving challenges. Success relies on stakeholder commitment, resource mobilization, and adaptive governance that meets sustainable development needs. With comprehensive planning and international alignment, the GSDS positions Belize to reach Horizon 2030's vision of a prosperous, peaceful nation. The collaborative efforts within the government and among development partners are essential for translating these goals into meaningful outcomes for current and future generations in Belize.

# LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR REAL ESTATE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

## **LAND UTILIZATION ACT, CHAPTER 188**

The Land Utilization Act (Chapter 188) of Belize, as revised in 2020, provides a structured approach to land management by designating specific Special Development Areas for regulated activities. This Act covers various regions, establishing zones where developments such as agriculture, residential, commercial, tourism, forestry, wildlife reserves, and environmental protection may be undertaken, depending on the area's classification. For each region, the Land Utilization Authority plays a central role in devising Development Plans, which require Ministerial approval. Once approved, these plans are accessible at the Ministry of Natural Resources and relevant local offices, ensuring transparency and community awareness.

Specific areas, like Monkey River (designated on November 30, 1991), Manatee (designated December 21, 1991), and Cayo District West (designated June 20, 1992), have unique sets of development types permitted, reflecting the environmental and social objectives of the Act. Notably, the Cayo District West Special Development Area regulations, implemented through Statutory Instrument (S.I.) 90 of 1992, allow development activities such as agriculture, tourism, and wildlife conservation, aligning with the district's natural and geographic features. Moreover, the Belize District Northeast area, declared on January 8, 1994, covers approximately 197,500 acres and serves as a controlled region for development to preserve local ecosystems.

The Act mandates that any development outside these regulated categories or exceeding specified density or zonation regulations incurs penalties. Infractions in the Manatee Special Development Area, for instance, incur fines of up to one thousand dollars if undertaken without adherence to the designated plan. This financial deterrent underscores the government's commitment to sustainable land use and the conservation of Belize's natural resources.

Each Development Plan, while overseen by the Land Utilization Authority, involves consultation with local stakeholders and institutions, ensuring that development aligns with both governmental and community interests. These plans, once established, are administered by the Authority or local agents appointed as necessary, allowing for localized oversight. Through these structured regulations, the Act aims to balance development needs with environmental preservation, guiding Belize towards sustainable growth within a legally enforced framework.

## **NATIONAL LANDS ACT, CHAPTER 191**

The National Lands Act, under Chapter 191, serves as Belize's governing framework for national land management, as consolidated in its 2020 revised edition. Initiated on June 13, 1992, by Minister Florencio Marin, this Act delegates powers and outlines regulations for effective national land administration, emphasizing regulated disposal and usage of state-owned lands. The Act's operational structure includes orders for delegating authority, particularly allowing the Minister of Natural Resources to transfer responsibilities to senior officers within the Ministry of Lands, as seen in the 2001 delegation order issued by Minister John Briceño. This delegation emphasizes administrative efficiency, especially for managing lease fiats and mortgage permissions on residential lots.

Key amendments address fee structures, such as the National Lands (Leases) (Transfer Fee) Order of October 24, 1992, which stipulates 3% and 5% transfer fees based on the property

value or sale consideration. Additional provisions in land lease regulations permit transfer fees for aliens at an additional 3%, highlighting differential rates for foreign entities and pre-existing regulatory frameworks for compulsory registration under the Registered Land Act.

The Act prescribes distinct land-use rules for national lands, categorized into town/village lots and rural lands. Applications for rural land are subject to restrictions on permanent crops and compliance with guidelines from Belize's Chief Agricultural Officer. These regulations mandate development obligations, notably the planting of permanent crops (e.g., coconuts, cacao, coffee, and mangoes) and land maintenance, with annual land tax payments and capital value installments as prerequisites. Failure to meet these conditions incurs penalties, up to lease cancellation by the Commissioner of Lands.

The Act reserves all minerals, including precious metals and fossil fuels, on national lands under governmental control, restricting extraction unless licensed by the Forest Department. Additionally, it mandates the preservation of public lands for communal benefit, with ministerial oversight ensuring appropriate land allocation. Surveys of both urban and rural areas further structure land division, incorporating road reservations and boundary demarcations.

The Act also addresses occupational permits for land reserves, covering residential and agricultural land under the Pomona Village Land Reservation Regulations and Ramonal-Zapote Reserve Regulations, allowing individual land occupation for specific crop cultivation or house plot establishment. These permits, managed by the Commissioner of Lands, stipulate occupancy fees and require compliance with the reserve's boundaries and good land management practices. Notably, under the Toledo Indian Reserve Rules, specific occupancy guidelines ensure access to land for Indigenous residents, with additional provisions under Forest Department supervision for sustainable cultivation.

This structured, tiered regulation, with periodic updates, like the Mode of Payment Regulations effective December 4, 2020, emphasizes strict payment adherence, ensuring payments for lease rent or purchases are directly processed through the responsible ministry cashier. These procedural measures underscore Belize's robust legal approach to national land management and sustainable land use, aiming to balance administrative authority with public accessibility.

### **REGISTERED LAND ACT**

The Registered Land Act, revised edition of 2003 and effective as of 31st October 2003, governs the registration, transfer, and management of land in Belize, establishing rigorous processes for transparency and legal integrity. Under Rule 1, it mandates a Land Register in formats prescribed by schedules, ensuring consistency across certificates, leases, and boundary documentation. The act provides for the verification of instruments by designated officers, including judges, magistrates, and attorneys, enhancing legal oversight. Fees, outlined in the Fifth Schedule, cover various applications such as land certificates and lease certificates, with specific charges for register inspection, official searches, and map or plan copies. Refunds on fees require Registrar approval, affirming fiscal control.

Further, the Act details partitioning, transfer, and power of attorney arrangements, with provisions for cautions and appeals to the Supreme Court. It allows for boundary surveys and new parcel registrations upon land partitioning or combination, strengthening land management flexibility. Notably, a system for override interests, like easements and profits, ensures that unregistered but legally recognized rights are maintained, crucial for traditional or communal land uses.

Applications for first registration of titles require evidence of ownership interest, subject to Registry verification and open for public inspection under controlled conditions. Additionally, in cases where land interests change due to events like inheritance or boundary disputes, procedural rules offer clear guidelines for transmissions, charges, and discharge of charges. This act thus encapsulates a robust legal framework, safeguarding property rights while adapting to Belize's evolving land use and ownership demands.

## **HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING ACT, CHAPTER 182**

The Housing and Town Planning Act, Chapter 182 of Belize's 2011 revised edition, establishes the Central Housing and Planning Authority to address national housing and urban planning needs, particularly through oversight on slum clearance, redevelopment, and compulsory acquisition of land. The Act mandates that the Central Authority, comprising eight members appointed by the Minister, prioritize the improvement of unhealthy areas and redevelopment of overcrowded or poorly arranged housing areas.

The Act grants the Central Authority powers to designate slum clearance areas where housing conditions threaten residents' health and welfare due to overcrowding, poor infrastructure, or lack of basic facilities. It can order demolition or reconstruction of buildings in such areas and provide compensation where appropriate, adhering to conditions in the Land Acquisition (Public Purposes) Act, Chapter 184. Compensation assessments account for the value of cleared sites, excluding the value of unsuitable buildings. However, well-maintained properties deemed structurally sound may receive additional compensation if reallocated for public welfare.

For housing schemes, the Act outlines steps for preparing redevelopment plans, which require approval from the Minister, as well as notification and consultation with local authorities. This ensures that affected residents and stakeholders are informed of proposed changes and provided with alternatives or compensation where displacement occurs. The Act empowers the Authority to manage tenant allocation, ensuring preference for individuals from unsanitary or overcrowded housing, thus enhancing fair access to housing improvements.

Moreover, the Act imposes controls on building usage post-demolition, requiring any redevelopment to comply with conditions set by the Central Authority, to optimize urban planning outcomes and prevent unsanctioned developments. It facilitates financial assistance to individuals aiming to improve housing conditions, requiring that these improvements align with health and safety standards. Additionally, the Act enforces penalties for violations, including unauthorized occupation or obstruction of officials, to ensure compliance with regulations, thereby upholding public health standards and urban development goals.

This legislative framework emphasizes Belize's commitment to sustainable housing through organized urban planning, ministerial oversight, and integration of public health considerations into housing policies.

## **BELIZE LAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ACT**

The Belize Land Development Authority Act, established on December 20, 1980, is a foundational statute that governs the Belize Land Development Authority (BLDA), a corporate entity with perpetual succession, mandated to manage land acquisition, development, and infrastructure improvement within Belize. This authority, through a board of directors that includes the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Financial Secretary, and the National Disaster Coordinator, among other members, is vested with significant powers for national land and agricultural development. The Minister of Agriculture appoints the Board and maintains oversight, including the ability to prescribe terms of service and approve the Authority's annual program.

The BLDA is responsible for a broad array of land-related functions and agricultural development projects, including land division and leasing, particularly in support of small farmers. It operates independently or in partnership with other entities to encourage agricultural production and foster processing and marketing infrastructure. The Act also allows the BLDA to sell and export agricultural products and engage in trade of agricultural chemicals and essential food commodities, with the goal of stabilizing and expanding agricultural outputs.

Central to the BLDA's operational mandate is the ability to provide financial support through loans, guarantees, and partnerships for land development projects. Furthermore, the Authority is empowered to engage in leasing, mortgaging, and the sale of assets, and may also borrow funds domestically or internationally to support its activities. It ensures the conservation of resources through regulatory powers, including rules on soil erosion, water conservation, crop treatment, and transportation practices to safeguard agricultural productivity and land sustainability.

The Act requires the BLDA to maintain accounts and submit an annual report to the Minister, who subsequently tables it before the National Assembly, ensuring fiscal transparency and

accountability. The Minister is empowered to initiate audits of BLDA's accounts, either independently or via the Auditor General, to maintain checks on financial activities. Additionally, the BLDA can implement regulations on land use, cultivation standards, disease control, and sustainable practices, with non-compliance resulting in penalties, including possible imprisonment or forfeiture.

The broad authority and regulatory capacity endowed upon the BLDA reflect its critical role in Belize's agricultural and land management strategies, serving as a central entity for integrated rural development and land utilization. This legislative structure aligns Belize's land development efforts with national economic and environmental goals, balancing commercial viability and public welfare in the country's agricultural sector.

### **BELIZE BUILDING ACT, UNDER CHAPTER 131**

The Belize Building Act, under Chapter 131, establishes a legal structure for building regulations across Belize, with a revised edition available as of December 31, 2020. This Act creates the Central Building Authority (CBA), comprised of eleven members appointed by the Minister. The CBA oversees building permits, construction standards, and safety protocols in conjunction with local Building Units governed by municipal authorities. The Act mandates that all construction and demolition projects meet safety and structural standards, with approvals required for new buildings, demolitions, and significant modifications to existing structures.

A key aspect of the Act is the role of the Director of Building Control, responsible for administering building regulations and issuing permits based on compliance with technical specifications. Permits must be issued within fourteen to thirty days, depending on the structure's size, and an application process is specified for public buildings and those outside municipal boundaries. For additional safety, Building Inspectors perform on-site inspections to ensure compliance with approved permits, and Stop Orders are issued for unauthorized construction activities. Violations of the Act can lead to fines or imprisonment for non-compliant individuals.

The Act enforces comprehensive safety measures for public buildings, including inspections by qualified engineers and fire safety assessments. It includes provisions for occupancy permits, which require confirmation from the CBA that the completed structure meets habitation standards. Additionally, specific regulations address temporary buildings, moveable dwellings, and public structures requiring special hurricane and earthquake-resistant designs.

### **LAND UTILIZATION (LAKE INDEPENDENCE SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT AREA) REGULATIONS**

The Land Utilization (Lake Independence Special Development Area) Regulations, 2019 designate the Lake Independence Project (LIP) as a Special Development Area, established under Statutory Instrument No. 49 of 2019 and gazette on July 25, 2019. This designation mandates the division of the area into Zone A and Zone B for targeted management and development. A Management Authority is appointed by the Minister, comprising the general manager and members of Belize Infrastructure Limited's Board of Directors. The authority is empowered with roles including project planning, contract preparation, and monitoring of sub-projects, integrating public and private sector contributions.

The Authority's functions for Zone A encompass defining sub-projects, collaborating with government departments, preparing business cases, executing procurement processes, and ensuring contract compliance with LIP Design Guidelines. It holds the authority to submit applications for construction permits to the Central Building Authority in accordance with the Belize Building Act. For Zone B, the Authority approves subdivisions to ensure alignment with design guidelines before advancing to the Land Subdivision and Utilization Authority.

This framework prioritizes sustainability, with contracts evaluated on environmental and social impacts, commercial viability, partnership potential, and structured deliverables. Development in the area is regulated, with specific allowances for residential, commercial, institutional, and civic purposes. Non-compliance incurs penalties, with fines for unauthorized development or breaches in zonal density.

The regulations enforce design compliance, with flexibility for authorized deviations, reinforcing Belize's structured approach to land utilization through sustainable urban planning and public-private cooperation in development initiatives.

### **BELIZE CITY COUNCIL KING'S PARK ZONING BYLAWS**

The Belize City Council King's Park Zoning Bylaws, enacted in 2009, establishes regulations for zoning, residential land use, and construction within Belize City's King's Park area. The bylaws define allowable land usage, prohibiting commercial establishments, high-rise buildings, and non-residential developments in this zone. Building restrictions mandate that structures do not exceed three stories or 36 feet in height, with strict setbacks: 4 feet from street, side, and rear boundaries, and 8 feet from high-tension lines. Residential buildings must be detached family dwellings, and septic tanks are allowed only if public sewer access is unavailable, requiring Public Health Department approval.

To maintain environmental standards, the bylaws restrict seafront usage, forbidding commercial marinas and gasoline storage on seafront lots. Additionally, shoreline protection measures are emphasized in collaboration with the Ministry of Natural Resources. The bylaws also require property owners to manage garbage and maintain lawns to prevent unsanitary conditions. Penalties apply for non-compliance, including fines and potential imprisonment for continued offenses.

Furthermore, vehicular maintenance is permitted on private property with conditions on waste disposal, while unauthorized parking in front of gates is prohibited. The bylaws ensure electrical installations meet the standards of the Public Utilities Commission and necessitate prior approval from the Central Building Authority for driveway and walkway constructions. Notably, lawful non-conforming uses existing before these bylaws retain validity, but new constructions and commercial operations must adhere to updated requirements within 60 days of enactment.

### **BELIZE CITY COUNCIL (BELLA VISTA ZONING) BY-LAWS**

The Belize City Council (Bella Vista Zoning) By-Laws, effective 9th August 2003, establish zoning and land use regulations specific to Bella Vista. These bylaws categorize Bella Vista into residential and commercial zones, each with distinct requirements. In the residential zone, only detached family dwellings are permitted, and no lot may have more than one residential building. Buildings in this zone cannot exceed three stories or 36 feet, and the construction area must not exceed 50% of the lot, with total coverage capped at 75%. Required setbacks include 15 feet from the street, 8 feet from the sides, and 15 feet from the rear. For waste disposal, septic tanks must be inspected and approved by the City Council Engineer and the Public Health Department.

The commercial zone mandates a maximum building height of 36 feet, with setbacks of 12 feet from all boundaries. Construction area limits are set to 60% of the lot, with parking allocation based on building size. The bylaws also outline vehicle maintenance rules, allowing only routine maintenance within residential zones, prohibiting oil changes.

Bella Vista's canal and waterway system is designated for non-commercial vessels only, with hurricane safety protocols requiring the removal of personal boats during severe weather alerts. Any construction or demolition requires permits, and buildings must meet a minimum valuation of BZ\$100,000. For new developments, owners must obtain approval from the Council and submit site-specific development plans, ensuring compliance with environmental and public health standards. Non-compliance results in fines or imprisonment, reinforcing these standards for orderly urban development.

### **BELMOPAN CITY COUNCIL ACT**

The Belmopan City Council Act (commenced 10th February 2000) and associated bylaws provide structured regulations for urban management in Belmopan, covering zoning, waste management, market operations, livestock control, and building regulations. These laws ensure an orderly development framework while prioritizing public safety, sanitation, and environmental integrity. The Belmopan (Zoning and Control Over Building Construction) By-Laws, updated in 1997, define zones for residential, commercial, and industrial uses, strictly regulating building types, heights, and setback requirements. Residential buildings, for instance, must be detached structures, observing minimum boundaries, and two-thirds site coverage is enforced to maintain open spaces.

The market bylaws restrict unauthorized sales, enforce cleanliness, and mandate health certifications for vendors, supporting food safety standards. Refuse collection is mandatory, with disposal fees categorized by property type and penalty provisions for non-compliance. Livestock regulations prohibit cattle from city streets and restrict animal presence to designated slaughter or

veterinary areas, enforcing penalties for violations.

A significant regulatory aspect is the Utility Coordination Unit established in 2005, which requires utility agencies to coordinate infrastructure works through the council, submit annual hurricane safety plans, and adhere to construction standards. Failure to comply results in fines, ensuring accountability and urban resilience. These laws collectively facilitate Belmopan's development, promoting safety, sustainable growth, and compliance across public and private sectors.

#### **BELIZE LAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ACT**

The Belize Land Development Authority Act, effective since 20th December 1980 and consolidated as of 31st December 2000, establishes the Belize Land Development Authority (BLDA) as a corporate entity tasked with land acquisition, development, and improvement. The BLDA's primary objectives include the provision of essential infrastructure like roads, drainage, and irrigation and the promotion of land-related projects. It can divide land for leasing or sale, focusing especially on the needs of small farmers.

The Board of the Authority, comprising representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and five other members appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, oversees all operational activities. The Minister holds significant oversight, approving the annual policy and specific regulations concerning soil erosion control, water conservation, and pest management. Financially, the BLDA maintains stringent accountability, preparing annual financial statements audited by an appointed auditor, who reports directly to the Board and the Minister.

Empowered with a variety of financial capabilities, including loan provisions and guarantees, the BLDA can acquire and manage properties, open bank accounts, and ensure employee welfare. The Act allows the BLDA to engage in commercial activities directly related to agricultural development, such as trading agricultural chemicals and establishing processing plants. The Authority's responsibilities further extend to submitting annual reports within four months post-financial year-end, ensuring transparency and compliance. Additionally, regulations formulated under this Act hold legal force, with penalties, including imprisonment of up to six months for non-compliance.

#### **LAND TAX ACT (APPEAL RULES)**

The Land Tax Act (Appeal Rules), outlined under Chapter 58 and revised in 2003, provides a structured process for appealing land tax assessments in Belize. When a taxpayer disputes an assessment, they may file a Notice of Appeal in a specific format (Form 1), signed by the appellant or their attorney, as mandated by Rule 5. The Registrar of the Supreme Court subsequently sets a hearing date, notifying both the Commissioner of Lands and Surveys and the appellant, with at least fifteen days' notice (Form 2). Appeals follow the procedural norms of the Supreme Court Rules, with the Judge empowered to issue amendments, adjournments, and enforce witness summonses (Form 3). Upon judgment, appeal outcomes are recorded in the Appeals Book for administrative continuity.

Additionally, the Rate of Tax Regulations issued under Section 22 by the Minister of Natural Resources, effective 26th February 1983, set a uniform land tax rate at one percent of unimproved value. This rate applies to all land types from 1st April 1983 onward, ensuring a standardized approach across agricultural, suburban, and beach properties. The combination of the Appeal Rules and Rate of Tax Regulations under Chapter 58 provides a transparent legal framework for taxpayers, ensuring that land valuations, disputes, and tax obligations are managed consistently and equitably within Belize's land tax system.

#### **LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT (CHAPTER 189)**

The Landlord and Tenant Act (Chapter 189) of Belize, revised edition of 2003, includes subsidiary regulations for managing forms, fees, and costs associated with landlord-tenant disputes. These rules ensure that all legal processes, such as distress warrants, recovery of possession, and tenant eviction, follow standardized documentation and cost structures. For instance, distress warrants (Form No. 1) authorize bailiffs to seize a tenant's property for rent recovery, excluding essential items like clothing and tools valued under twenty-five dollars. Additionally, an inventory of goods distrained must be prepared by bailiffs, cataloging items seized.

The recovery of possession order (Form No. 3) permits landlords to reclaim properties through court-issued mandates, while ejectment warrants (Form No. 4) enable bailiffs to forcibly remove

tenants in cases of non-compliance. The Act prescribes fees for complaint filings, summons issuance, and execution writs, beginning at \$2.50 for possession claims and scaling up based on claim amounts. For distress actions, a five percent fee on sale proceeds is levied, alongside mileage fees for bailiff travel beyond one mile from court premises.

These structured forms and cost schedules under Chapter 189 underscore Belize's efforts to enforce landlord-tenant rights, balancing landlord entitlements with procedural fairness for tenants. The inclusion of specific bailiff fees and a detailed schedule for money paid into court ensures clarity and consistency, facilitating effective and transparent dispute resolution in the rental sector.

### **ALIENS LANDHOLDING ACT (CHAPTER 179)**

The Aliens Landholding Act (Chapter 179), revised as of 31st December 2000, regulates land ownership by non-citizens in Belize, with the primary aim of safeguarding national land resources. An "alien" is defined as any person or company not meeting specific citizenship or domicile criteria, including companies where half or more of shares, directors, or voting rights are held by non-citizens. Generally, land ownership by aliens is prohibited, but exceptions allow licensed landholding with Ministerial approval under Section 6, provided development terms are met. Unlicensed land acquisitions by aliens render titles void and forfeit any associated property to the Crown.

The Act enables the Minister to establish designated areas where landholding terms for aliens may be defined, subject to specified conditions. In cases of license condition violations, the Minister may void the license after issuing a three-month compliance notice. Non-compliance results in automatic forfeiture, and the Supreme Court provides an appeal pathway for aggrieved parties. For companies, Section 8 restricts share transfers to aliens without Ministerial consent, with fines reaching \$5,000 and potential forfeiture of shares for unauthorized transfers.

Additionally, the Act enforces forfeiture proceedings for any land or shares illegally held by or for aliens. Through Section 11, the Registrar General is authorized to update land records, transferring forfeited assets to the Crown. This comprehensive framework ensures Belizean land resources are preserved for citizens and allows controlled foreign investment in alignment with national interests.

### **LAND ACQUISITION (PROMOTERS) ACT (CHAPTER 183)**

The Land Acquisition (Promoters) Act (Chapter 183), revised as of 31st December 2000, authorizes specific entities, termed "promoters," to compulsorily acquire land in Belize, provided it benefits the public or a substantial public sector. A promoter, defined as a corporation, company, or individual interested in acquiring land under this Act, must submit a formal application to the Minister of Lands, detailing the purpose and specifications of the desired land. The Minister may require the promoter to deposit funds to cover an inquiry assessing the public utility of the intended acquisition.

A designated inquiry officer is appointed by the Minister to evaluate whether the acquisition would benefit the public. This officer holds powers like a magistrate, enabling the summoning of witnesses and collection of documents. The National Assembly reviews the inquiry's findings and, if satisfied of its public utility, may approve the acquisition through a formal resolution. Upon approval, the land vests fully in the promoter, free of encumbrances, after the promoter provides financial security and agrees to terms on land use, project timelines, and public access.

Failure by the promoter to meet these terms results in forfeiture of the land to the Crown, enforceable upon a judgment confirming the breach. The Act also permits the Minister to authorize promoters to conduct surveys or inspections on target land, aligning this authority with provisions under the Lands Acquisition (Public Purposes) Act. Promoters are responsible for all acquisition-related costs, and the exemption from duties and fees under the Public Purposes Act does not apply to promoters under this legislation. This framework thus ensures that land acquisitions by private promoters in Belize are meticulously vetted and align with national interests.

### **LAND ACQUISITION (PUBLIC PURPOSES) ACT**

The Land Acquisition (Public Purposes) Act of Belize, effective from 1st April 1947 and consolidated as of 31st December 2000, provides a structured framework for the compulsory acquisition of land for public purposes. Under Part II, the Minister of Lands can initiate acquisition procedures through a declaration of public purpose, which must be published twice in the Gazette with a six-week

interval, and notice posted at the property location. Once the declaration is finalized, title to the land automatically vests in the Crown.

Following the declaration, an authorized officer engages with the landowner for purchase negotiations, ensuring fair terms. Should parties fail to agree, the Act mandates that a Board of Assessment determine appropriate compensation, covering both undeveloped and developed land values. The Act requires this board to include the Chief Justice or an appointed judge as Chairman, a Minister-appointed member, and a nominee from the landowner, unless the owner declines or delays.

Compensation assessment adheres to rules in Part V, prohibiting consideration of personal attachments or any anticipated increase in land value due to intended public use. Compensation covers severance, disturbance, and other injurious effects to adjacent properties, where applicable. Furthermore, compensation disputes involving amounts less than \$5,000 are resolved in Magistrate's Court.

The Act allows landowners to voluntarily convey land to the Crown for fair market value, overseen by the Commissioner of Lands. Forfeited land, resulting from procedural breaches by either party, is managed through the General Registry to transfer titles. Additionally, the Act grants exemption from stamp duties and registration fees, ensuring that the acquisition process remains cost-effective for public projects.

### **LAND ADJUDICATION ACT (COMMENCEMENT) ORDER**

The Land Adjudication Act (Commencement) Order of Belize was officially established to activate the provisions within Chapter 185, specifically regarding land adjudication processes. Signed by Johnny Briceño, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, the order designated April 20, 1999, as the effective date for the Act's enforcement. This legislative action was set into motion under the authority conferred by Section 1 of the Land Adjudication Act, aiming to regulate the systematic adjudication of land titles in Belize. The Subsidiary Laws were revised and printed under the Law Revision Act, Chapter 3 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, with the 2003 Revised Edition showing the subsidiary laws as updated as of October 31, 2003.

These provisions are part of Belize's efforts to formalize land ownership, streamline land-related governance, and ensure that adjudications align with statutory standards. The Land Adjudication Act, originally enacted as Act 27 of 1992 and later amended through Act 46 of 1999, forms a critical framework for adjudicating land disputes and clarifying ownership rights across Belize. The document also reflects Belize's administrative processes by specifying that the printing and distribution of this legal framework were conducted under governmental authority at No. 1 Power Lane, Belmopan. The official issuance of this order is essential for operationalizing land adjudication to resolve conflicts, register rightful ownership, and support land management policies, underscoring the regulatory strides Belize has made towards structured land tenure.

### **LAND REFORM (SECURITY OF TENURE) ACT, CHAPTER 186**

The Land Reform (Security of Tenure) Act, Chapter 186, effective January 1, 1961, addresses landlord-tenant relationships in Belize, emphasizing tenant security and regulation of rent increases. Revised on December 31, 2000, it delineates several provisions, including mandatory 12-month notices for tenancy termination, specifying the use of Form 1 for notice compliance. The Act mandates Land Tribunals under Section 8, each comprising a Chairman and two members, empowered to oversee tenant disputes, rent issues, and compensation.

Rent increases, regulated by Section 13, require landlords to provide six-month notice prior to January of the following year. Tenants can dispute rent hikes by applying to the Tribunal within one month of notice receipt. Provisions also cover milpa tenancies, ensuring tenants have an annual, exclusive parcel allocation for crop cultivation.

Under Section 18, tenants may claim compensation for unexhausted improvements at tenancy termination, while disturbance compensation applies if the landlord ends the tenancy, calculated as a percentage of paid rent. Section 22 addresses unresolved compensation agreements, allowing either party to appeal to the Tribunal for determination. The Minister of Natural Resources holds authority to review Tribunal decisions, with final decisions binding.

Tribunal procedures require open public meetings, adherence to First Schedule forms for applications, and structured protocols for notification and hearings. Additionally, costs incurred in proceedings align with the Inferior Courts Act guidelines, facilitating enforceability like district court decisions. Through its provisions, the Act prioritizes land tenure stability and tenant rights protection, making it a central framework for managing tenancy-related issues within Belize's legal landscape.

#### **LAND SURVEYORS ACT, CHAPTER 187**

The Land Surveyors Act, Chapter 187 of Belize, revised in the 2003 Edition, is a comprehensive framework governing land surveying practices, standards, and regulations. Established to ensure accuracy and consistency in surveying, the Act includes provisions for handling disputes, measurement standards, and the presentation of surveys. It specifies that distances must be recorded in either International Metres or English Feet, and angular measurements in degrees, minutes, and seconds.

Survey methodologies are tightly regulated, with a particular emphasis on triangulation, trilateration, traverse, and air surveys for precise boundary definition. Beacons are required to mark boundaries, and must be accurately positioned, maintained, and repaired if damaged. For areas without existing control, surveyors must consult the Commissioner of Lands and Surveys for guidance on datum and surveying methods.

Additionally, the Act mandates that field notes be recorded systematically and computations follow specific forms as designated by the Commissioner. Survey plans must be plotted using Universal Traverse Mercator Projection, ensuring uniformity in scale, layout, and presentation. Public access to maps and plans is guaranteed, though fees apply for certain services, and licensed surveyors benefit from specific discounts.

A significant regulatory aspect of the Act is the requirement for independent checks and accurate recording of traverses. Before surveys can be authenticated, they must undergo rigorous accuracy verification, underscoring the law's commitment to precision and reliability in land surveying.

#### **LAW OF PROPERTY ACT, CHAPTER 190**

The Law of Property Act, Chapter 190 of Belize, revised as of December 31, 2000, lays the foundation for property rights, legal estates, and equitable interests. The Act, originating on March 1, 1954, structures legal principles for land ownership, delineating rights to fee simple absolute estates, tenancy, and joint ownership. It defines legal and equitable interests and grants legal protections to various forms of property holdings, including leaseholds and encumbrances. Notably, the Act establishes that only certain estates, such as fee simple and leaseholds, can exist as legal estates while other rights may only subsist as equitable interests.

Provisions under the Act regulate transfers of property, specifying that interests must generally be created in writing and, where applicable, recorded. It includes detailed stipulations on land sale contracts (Section 55) and requires these agreements to be documented to enforce them legally. The Act further emphasizes trusts for sale of land, outlining trustee responsibilities and consultation requirements with beneficiaries of full age. Joint ownership mandates that, except under specified conditions, title remains in trust for sale to prevent unwanted severance of interests, ensuring a structured approach to handling joint tenancies.

In the management of mortgages and charges, the Act permits mortgagees significant powers, including the right to sell without a court order, underscoring the mortgagee's legal priorities. For land possession, long-standing ownership (30 years) can establish title rights under specific conditions, reflecting the Act's nuanced approach to land tenure and security interests. This foundational statute is integral for understanding the property law framework in Belize, offering both flexibility and safeguards for land transactions, management, and estate transfers.

# NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MASTER PLAN (NSTMP)

The National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (NSTMP), an ambitious blueprint developed by the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) and endorsed in 2012, was intended to guide Belize's tourism sector development over two decades, spanning 2010 to 2030. Backed by the Inter-American Development Bank and closely aligned with Belize's Horizon 2030 national strategy, the NSTMP aims to build a competitive, sustainable, and inclusive tourism industry. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, intensifying climate change impacts, and new global economic and technological trends, the BTB recognized an urgent need to update this master plan, addressing the challenges that were either underestimated or unforeseen when the plan was first conceptualized.

One of the immediate and severe shocks to Belize's tourism sector was the COVID-19 pandemic, which precipitated an unprecedented 70% decline in international arrivals due to border closures and global travel restrictions. Tourism, accounting for 18-25% of Belize's GDP and supporting over 22% of employment, saw a sharp contraction, with the number of overnight visitors falling to just 370,526 in 2022 from a high of over half a million before the pandemic. In response, the NSTMP update emphasizes resilient tourism frameworks that can withstand similar global disruptions. For instance, increased attention is now directed toward enhancing public health infrastructure and adopting digital solutions to streamline traveler experiences, aligning with the G20's recommendation for safe and seamless travel protocols. This includes an emphasis on Visitor Expenditure & Motivation Surveys (VEMS) to capture data on tourist behavior, satisfaction, and spending, improving Belize's capacity to tailor tourism products effectively.

The pandemic underscored the need for diversification and resilience within Belize's tourism portfolio, particularly considering climate change risks. Belize's coastal zones—where 60-70% of tourism assets are concentrated—are acutely vulnerable to sea level rise, extreme weather events, and coral bleaching, which threatens the Barrier Reef and associated marine ecosystems that are central to Belize's ecotourism appeal. The NSTMP update incorporates GIS-based spatial planning and 2050-2100 projections for flood risks, which form the foundation of a regional adaptation strategy. This spatial data-driven approach informs three GIS-based action plans, enabling Belize to safeguard critical tourism areas by identifying high-risk zones and implementing targeted, sustainable infrastructure improvements.

Further, the NSTMP's Destination Competitiveness Model, inspired by the Ritchie and Crouch framework, identifies Belize's comparative advantages—its rich Maya heritage, expansive marine reserves, and unique cultural diversity. Yet, it highlights areas requiring improvement, such as visitor satisfaction and destination governance. Recognizing the limitations of previous data collection methods, the revised NSTMP adopts a more robust VEMS framework to track cross-border visitor traffic, expenditure patterns, and tourist preferences. Such data will support refined marketing strategies and tailored product offerings, positioning Belize to compete effectively with other Caribbean destinations for high-value tourism segments. Additionally, cruise tourism policies have been updated to mitigate environmental impacts, and a forthcoming Nautical Tourism Policy is anticipated to address the burgeoning interest in Belize as a destination for yachting and marine tourism.

The NSTMP update also emphasizes strengthening governance and stakeholder integration, as Belize's tourism sector encompasses multiple stakeholders, including local communities,

private tourism operators, and government bodies. To foster collaboration, a series of stakeholder workshops were conducted in 2022, including local government officials, the private sector, and GIS experts. These workshops served as platforms to address governance gaps, improve policy coherence, and align public and private sector objectives. New policies, such as the Cruise Tourism Policy 2023, were shaped with input from these engagements, which aim to balance economic benefits with environmental safeguards. In particular, the Nautical Tourism Policy will introduce stringent guidelines to manage the environmental footprint of yachting and marine-based tourism while ensuring the sector's economic viability.

Addressing global economic pressures and supply chain vulnerabilities, especially considering events like the Ukraine crisis, is also crucial for Belize's tourism sector. Belize relies heavily on imported fossil fuels, making it susceptible to energy cost fluctuations. In response, the NSTMP update advocates for renewable energy adoption and water conservation practices in tourism operations, both of which contribute to reducing the sector's carbon footprint and operational costs. This includes exploring options like solar energy installations in high-tourism zones and promoting rainwater harvesting systems as standard practice in hospitality establishments. Additionally, market diversification efforts aim to reduce reliance on North American tourists by attracting visitors from Europe and Latin America, which would enhance sectoral resilience by broadening Belize's tourism base.

Cultural preservation remains a key focus, as Belize's ethnic diversity, represented by Maya, Garifuna, Kriol, and other groups, is an intrinsic part of its tourism appeal. The NSTMP highlights the need for protocols to prevent over-commercialization and to ensure respectful engagement with indigenous cultures. Initiatives include training programs for local artisans and community-based tourism operators, enabling them to capitalize on tourism opportunities while maintaining cultural authenticity. For example, the plan advocates developing agribusiness and wellness tourism products that leverage local knowledge and resources, creating a sustainable revenue stream for Indigenous communities while enhancing the visitor experience through unique, locally rooted offerings.

Infrastructural challenges, particularly in waste management and urban planning, remain significant obstacles. Rapidly increasing visitor numbers in areas like Caye Caulker and San Pedro have strained waste disposal systems, posing a risk to local ecosystems. The BTB's Tourism Trust Fund is earmarked to support infrastructure projects that improve waste management, enhance public amenities, and create safe, attractive spaces for both tourists and locals. The establishment of a tourism police unit and a Crime Observatory demonstrates Belize's commitment to ensuring visitor safety, which is integral to maintaining its appeal as a safe destination. As crime rates can affect destination desirability, especially in emerging markets, these safety measures are expected to strengthen Belize's position on the global tourism safety index.

Continuous monitoring and evaluation systems form the backbone of the NSTMP, allowing Belize to track and adapt its strategies based on visitor satisfaction, service quality, and other key performance indicators. The revised plan uses a Strategic Policy-Driven Framework, inspired by Ritchie and Crouch, to ensure that sustainability and economic objectives are continuously aligned. This framework also facilitates adaptive responses to unforeseen events, such as natural disasters or economic shifts, by embedding resilience principles in the tourism sector's management practices.

Belize's updated NSTMP thus represents a nuanced, multi-dimensional strategy that addresses the unique ecological, economic, and cultural characteristics of the country. With the integration of climate resilience, improved data-driven decision-making, and enhanced stakeholder collaboration, Belize is well-positioned to achieve its vision of a sustainable, inclusive, and globally competitive tourism sector by 2030. By aligning its policies and infrastructure with the NSTMP's goals, Belize can protect its natural and cultural heritage while fostering an environment where tourism contributes positively to both the national economy and local livelihoods.

# STAKEHOLDER MAPPING: Key Players in Belize's Sustainability Landscape

## GOVERNMENT

### **Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management**

The Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management of Belize focuses on environmental preservation, sustainable development, and climate resilience. Key departments include the Department of Environment, the National Biodiversity Office, and the National Climate Change Office. Each department plays a pivotal role in safeguarding Belize's natural resources, supporting biodiversity, and mitigating climate risks.

The Sustainable Development Unit (SDU), established in 2012, emphasizes a sustainable approach to Belize's development, reflecting the government's commitment to preserving its natural heritage. Another prominent organization, the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT), was founded in 1996 to oversee Belize's protected areas, which now encompass over 100 reserves. Additionally, ongoing projects, such as climate resilience and socio-economic integration of displaced persons, underscore the ministry's approach to combining environmental and social priorities.

### **Department of the Environment (DOE)**

The Department of the Environment (DOE) of Belize, part of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management, is dedicated to environmental protection through the enforcement of the Environmental Protection Act. Its mandate includes regulating environmental pollution, overseeing natural resource conservation, and managing sustainable practices. Key initiatives include services such as environmental clearance applications, guidelines for environmental compliance, and public resources on environmental issues. The DOE also promotes community-based activities focused on environmental improvement and public awareness. Additionally, it addresses pressing environmental issues, such as single-use plastic pollution, which impacts Belize's waterways and ecosystems. The department collaborates with both local and international partners, aiming to build resilient communities and sustainable ecosystems. The DOE frequently updates the public with news releases and provides consultancy opportunities related to environmental research and management in Belize.

### **Belize National Climate Change Office (BNCCO)**

The Belize National Climate Change Office (BNCCO), established in 2015, leads Belize's efforts to combat climate change and build resilience across sectors. Its responsibilities include coordinating national, regional, and international climate initiatives and ensuring alignment with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) obligations, such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the Biennial Update Report (BUR). The BNCCO also drives policy development, with achievements such as the Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS) and the Climate Finance Strategy. Through initiatives like the National GHG Inventory and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), the BNCCO integrates climate resilience and mitigation into Belize's development agenda.

### **National Biodiversity Office (NBIO)**

The National Biodiversity Office (NBIO) of Belize was established in 2020 to coordinate the management of protected areas under the National Protected Areas System Act and oversee the conservation of Belize's biodiversity. Operating without additional government funding or staff, the NBIO is the primary government entity responsible for biodiversity-

related policies and commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Its mission is to protect Belize's ecosystems, partnering with various stakeholders to maximize sustainable social and economic opportunities. Key services include management planning, research application processing in protected areas, effectiveness evaluations, project endorsements, and updates to the Protected Areas Registry and National Biodiversity Strategy. The NBIO also emphasizes public awareness to build informed opinions that support conservation efforts.

### **Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT)**

The Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) is a statutory body established in 1996 under the Protected Areas Conservation Trust Act, No. 15 of 1995. Its mission is to sustainably enhance Belize's socio-ecological systems through strategic financing and partnerships. Over the years, PACT has evolved from a grant-funding mechanism to becoming Belize's accredited National Implementing Entity (NIE) of the Adaptation Fund and the country's first National Direct Access Entity of the Green Climate Fund. The organization has been engaged in fiduciary roles for agencies such as the World Bank, the Meso-American Reef Fund (MAR Fund), and the Belize Nature Conservation Foundation (BNCF). In 2018, PACT transitioned from an annual competitive grants program to a Conservation Investment Program guided by a Conservation Investment Strategy, taking a long-term approach to responding to the needs of Belize's National Protected Areas System (BNPAS) while supporting biodiversity and ecosystem protection, building financial sustainability, and expanding socio-economic benefits from Belize's Protected Areas System.

## **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS (NPOS)**

### **Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations (APAMO)**

The Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations (APAMO) is Belize's premier network of non-governmental organizations focused on the conservation of the country's diverse ecosystems. Established in 2007, APAMO unites member organizations committed to protecting Belize's biodiversity and ensuring sustainable use of its natural resources. APAMO supports its members through resource sharing, advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of protected areas management. The organization hosts awareness events like the annual Conserv-a-thon and youth engagement programs, fostering a culture of environmental stewardship across Belize. By advocating for strengthened partnerships with the government, APAMO plays a crucial role in advancing conservation policies that benefit local communities and contribute to Belize's national development goals. Through projects like the APAMO Conservation News program and collaborations with the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) and Belize Tourism Board, APAMO raises public awareness about conservation issues and empowers smaller, community-based organizations to preserve Belize's invaluable ecological heritage.

### **Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD)**

Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD) is a Belizean non-profit dedicated to conserving the natural resources and biodiversity of the Chiquibul-Maya Mountains, one of Belize's most ecologically significant regions. As co-managers of the expansive Chiquibul National Park and Forest Reserve, FCD oversees the largest protected area in Belize and the largest cave system in Central America. Their efforts span environmental education, biodiversity research, cultural heritage documentation, and community engagement. FCD's Chiquibul Park Rangers play a pivotal role, conducting patrols to protect the region's ecosystems and mitigate illegal activities. Additionally, their Karst Management Unit gathers critical data on the Chiquibul Cave System, supporting conservation strategies for this unique landscape. Through collaboration with local communities and international partners, FCD promotes sustainable practices and environmental stewardship, ensuring the protection of Belize's invaluable natural heritage.

### **Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI)**

The Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI) is a Belizean non-profit organization dedicated to conserving the natural diversity of northeastern Belize. Established in 2012, CSFI evolved from the Shipstern Nature Reserve, which was created in 1989 by the International Tropical Conservation Fund. The organization focuses on protecting key ecosystems through co-management agreements, effective vigilance, sustainable forest management, scientific research, environmental education, community engagement, and strategic alliances. CSFI manages several protected areas, including the Shipstern Conservation and Management Area, Honey Camp National Park, and Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve. Their conservation efforts aim to preserve habitats of high

conservation value and their flora and fauna, while also ensuring the connection of key habitats with other natural systems through the creation of biological corridors. Additionally, CSFI has developed fair and responsible tourism activities around local nature and culture, ensuring that income generated benefits all partners involved and that profits remain within the area.

### **Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE)**

The Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE) is a non-profit organization established in 1995 with the mission to conserve the biodiversity and cultural heritage of Belize. Situated on a 1,153-acre privately protected area within the Maya Mountains, BFREE operates a biological field station that supports scientific research, environmental education, and conservation initiatives. The field station provides housing and logistical support for researchers and conservation workers, facilitating studies on various ecological and evolutionary topics. Additionally, BFREE partners with over 50 educational institutions to offer field courses that introduce students to rainforest ecology and conservation management. The organization also implements programs aimed at creating sustainable development opportunities for alternative livelihoods for Belizeans.

### **Plenty Belize**

Plenty Belize, established in 1997, is a registered non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to the sustainable development of the Toledo District in southern Belize. Operating from Jacintoville, the organization collaborates with local communities to address needs in agriculture, health, nutrition, education, and renewable energy. A notable initiative is the Garden-based Agriculture for Toledo's Environment (GATE) program, which has introduced organic school gardens in over 40 schools, promoting sustainable agriculture and improved nutrition among students. Additionally, Plenty Belize has implemented solar energy projects, such as the installation of a 6,540W centralized solar system in San Jose Village, providing electricity to public buildings and residences. The organization also emphasizes women's development, micro-enterprise, and environmental awareness, aiming to enhance the quality of life for the diverse populations of the Toledo District.

### **Belize Mangrove Alliance**

The Belize Mangrove Alliance is a conservation organization dedicated to preserving and restoring Belize's mangrove ecosystems, which are crucial for coastal resilience, biodiversity, and climate adaptation. Mangroves serve as natural barriers against erosion and tropical storms, protecting shorelines and providing essential nursery habitats for marine species that sustain local fisheries. The Alliance collaborates with over 40 partners, including research institutions and conservation groups, to protect and restore mangroves across Belize, covering 800 hectares under protection and restoration efforts. It supports initiatives focused on research, community involvement, and policy advocacy to ensure sustainable mangrove management and foster resilient coastal ecosystems. Through ongoing projects, the Belize Mangrove Alliance aims to expand awareness and promote actions for climate mitigation and ecosystem conservation.

### **Ya'axché Conservation Trust**

The Ya'axché Conservation Trust is a Belizean nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the Maya Golden Landscape, a region of critical biodiversity in southern Belize. This landscape connects the Maya Mountain Massif to the Mesoamerican Reef and includes protected areas, private lands, and indigenous territories. Ya'axché works closely with local communities to manage and protect these areas, emphasizing sustainable livelihoods, biodiversity conservation, and environmental education. Their efforts encompass various initiatives, including the Protected Areas Program, which manages the Bladen Nature Reserve, Golden Stream Corridor Preserve, and Maya Mountain North Forest Reserve. Through innovative surveillance and conservation techniques, Ya'axché enhances the effectiveness of protected area management and safeguards threatened species like the harpy eagle and Baird's tapir. Their collaborative approach empowers local communities, enabling sustainable practices such as climate-smart agriculture and conservation-focused enterprises, thus creating a harmonious balance between human development and nature conservation.

### **Belize Audubon Society**

The Belize Audubon Society is a prominent non-governmental organization dedicated to conserving Belize's natural resources through sustainable environmental practices and community engagement. Established in 1969, the society plays a crucial role in protecting biodiversity and managing key conservation areas, including national parks and wildlife sanctuaries like the

Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, known for its jaguar population. Beyond preservation, the organization emphasizes environmental education, empowering local communities to be stewards of their environment. Through partnerships with governmental bodies and other NGOs, the Belize Audubon Society works to balance ecological conservation with the socio-economic needs of Belizean communities, promoting sustainable tourism and fostering environmental awareness among locals and visitors alike. Their efforts have become vital to Belize's eco-tourism sector, attracting visitors who are keen to experience the country's rich biodiversity while supporting conservation initiatives.

### **Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI)**

The Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI) is a Belize-based non-profit organization committed to environmental conservation and sustainable economic development in northeastern Belize. Established originally as the Shipstern Nature Reserve, CSFI oversees protected areas through co-management agreements with the Belizean government. Its conservation strategies focus on habitat preservation, biodiversity research, and sustainable forest management, particularly in the Northern Biological Corridor. The organization also promotes fair tourism, aiming to benefit local communities economically while reinvesting profits into conservation and development initiatives. CSFI's projects include forest gene pool preservation, notably with mahogany trees, and establishing biological corridors that connect habitats. Managed by a diverse board of Belizean and international conservationists, CSFI combines grassroots conservation efforts with sustainable economic practices to support Belize's unique ecosystems and communities.

### **Mayflower Bocawina National Park**

Mayflower Bocawina National Park, established in 2001, spans over 7,000 acres in Belize's Stann Creek District. Initially focused on preserving the Mayflower Archaeological Site, the park's mission has expanded to include the protection of its diverse ecosystems, rich biodiversity, and scenic landscapes. Visitors can explore several hiking trails leading to waterfalls such as Bocawina Falls, Three Sisters Falls, and Antelope Falls. The park also offers opportunities for birdwatching and wildlife observation, with species like Baird's tapir, Yucatan black howler monkey, and jaguar inhabiting the area. Additionally, the park features unexcavated Mayan temple mounds, including the Maintzunun temple mound and Tau Witz, reflecting Belize's cultural heritage.

### **Programme for Belize (PFB)**

Programme for Belize (PFB) is a non-governmental organization established in 1988 dedicated to the conservation and sustainable management of Belize's natural resources, particularly through the management of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area (RBCMA). Covering 254,000 acres, the RBCMA is Belize's largest private reserve, functioning under IUCN's category VI for sustainable use areas. PFB promotes ecosystem conservation while allowing regulated forest resource use, which includes responsible timber extraction and biodiversity monitoring. Additionally, PFB emphasizes eco-tourism, offering experiences at La Milpa Eco-Lodge and Hill Bank Field Station, integrating visitors into conservation efforts. PFB's mission extends to preserving habitat integrity, restoring native species, and supporting carbon footprint reduction, aligning closely with Belize's national and global environmental goals.

### **Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD)**

The Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD) is a Belizean NGO dedicated to conserving marine resources and fostering sustainable development within the Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. Rooted in community-oriented stewardship, SACD works collaboratively with local stakeholders to protect the bay's biodiversity while promoting the sustainable use of resources. SACD's initiatives span surveillance, enforcement, research, monitoring, and education, each designed to ensure long-term environmental health and social benefits. Through community engagement programs, SACD empowers residents to participate in conservation efforts, blending ecological awareness with socioeconomic progress. Their projects, such as the "Smart Coasts" initiative, bolster local resilience against climate change impacts, particularly for vulnerable coastal communities. SACD's approach embodies a sustainable, community-inclusive model for environmental preservation in Belize.

### **Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM)**

The Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) is an NGO in Belize dedicated to promoting Indigenous rights and environmental stewardship, particularly among the Maya communities surrounding the Sarstoon Temash National Park. Established nearly three decades

ago, SATIIM advocates for Indigenous self-determination, focusing on the principle of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) in environmental decision-making. The organization works closely with local communities to safeguard natural resources and address socio-economic challenges through sustainable practices. A significant initiative involves SATIIM's recent partnership with the European Union to enhance FPIC implementation across Belize, ensuring that Indigenous voices are integral to development projects impacting their lands. Additionally, SATIIM supports sustainable forestry management, biodiversity conservation, and Indigenous women's rights, underscoring its commitment to both cultural heritage and environmental resilience. Through community-driven mapping projects, SATIIM enables Maya communities to document traditional land use and create sustainable resource management frameworks, fostering a model of Indigenous-led environmental governance.

### **Southern Environmental Association (SEA)**

The Southern Environmental Association (SEA) in Belize is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the conservation of marine ecosystems in southern Belize. Formed through the merger of Friends of Nature and the Toledo Association for Sustainable Tourism and Empowerment, SEA manages two prominent marine protected areas: the Gladden Spit & Silk Cayes Marine Reserve (GSSCMR) and Laughing Bird Caye National Park (LBCNP). The organization focuses on sustainable stewardship through initiatives in education, research, and community outreach. SEA's programs include annual summer camps for youth, outreach to local fisherfolk, and environmental awareness campaigns that foster a strong community connection to marine conservation. The organization emphasizes hands-on engagement, such as clean-up campaigns and school enhancement sessions, to encourage sustainable practices among local communities. Through partnerships and continuous efforts, SEA aims to preserve Belize's coastal and marine biodiversity for future generations.

### **Belize Karst Habitat Conservation (BKHC)**

The Belize Karst Habitat Conservation (BKHC) is a community-focused NGO committed to protecting Belize's karst landscapes, particularly the Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve. BKHC's mission emphasizes adaptive conservation through innovative management strategies that benefit both local communities and Belize's natural environment. Their approach combines community outreach, natural resource management, and research-based monitoring to maintain the ecological health of Belize's diverse karst regions, which are crucial for biodiversity. By fostering community involvement, BKHC aims to inspire and educate citizens on sustainable practices, empowering them to actively participate in environmental conservation. Their initiatives support conservation efforts not only locally but with a vision for global impact, promoting a blend of education, science, and technological innovation for long-term resource management.

## **TOP REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS**

### **37 Trees**

37 Trees is a unique real estate development company in Belize, blending luxury with sustainability and community impact. The firm specializes in creating bespoke properties for international investors, particularly those seeking high-end, resort-style homes. Their developments are in Belize's most scenic and sought-after areas, including beachfront and rainforest estates near The Lodge at Jaguar Reef and the Sleeping Giant Rainforest Lodge. With a focus on affluent buyers who desire a seamless investment process, 37 Trees offers fully managed services from property selection and design to construction and landscaping. Their properties include options for personalized home plans and pre-designed layouts, all crafted to integrate with Belize's natural beauty.

Sustainability is at the heart of 37 Trees' mission, with a commitment to plant 37 trees for each home sold. This initiative underscores their dedication to preserving Belize's rich biodiversity while contributing positively to the environment. Their approach marries luxury real estate with ecological responsibility, making them an appealing choice for investors who prioritize sustainable living. By partnering with local builders and contractors, 37 Trees ensures that each development aligns with both local culture and the natural landscape, fostering a harmonious balance between high-end living and environmental stewardship in Belize.

### **Vida & Co. Ltd**

Vida & Co. Ltd., a premier real estate company in Belize, offers a wide selection of properties tailored to meet diverse buyer needs, from residential homes and beachfront villas to commercial properties and farmland. The company's listings span popular regions such as Placencia, Cayo District, and the Belize District, catering to those seeking investment opportunities, luxury homes, or idyllic retreats in Belize's lush landscapes. Vida & Co. showcases properties that highlight Belize's natural beauty and economic growth potential, appealing to both local and international investors. In addition to property listings, Vida & Co. provides comprehensive land services, escrow support, real estate marketing, and professional photography, ensuring clients receive a complete and streamlined experience from start to finish. Their expertise extends beyond transactions, as they offer guidance through Belize's legal and financial landscapes, assisting clients in making informed decisions. Vida & Co.'s commitment to customer satisfaction and market knowledge positions it as a trusted partner for property investment in Belize, whether clients are looking to buy, rent, or sell.

### **Belize Secret Beach Properties**

Belize Secret Beach Properties, located on Ambergris Caye, offers a range of real estate options ideal for investors and expatriates looking to capitalize on Belize's expanding property market. From affordable lots in the Palm Gardens area to upscale residences in Mahogany Bay Village, the properties cater to varying budgets and lifestyle preferences. Palm Gardens offers plots measuring 60 by 75 feet starting at \$35,000 USD, providing buyers flexibility in building timelines and the potential for appreciation. For those looking for more luxury, South Ambergris Village and Mahogany Bay Village feature prime waterfront lots and homes with access to Caribbean waters, promoting a blend of personal use and investment opportunities.

Ambergris Caye's rapid development and tourism appeal position it as a high-demand area, making Secret Beach properties attractive for future growth and property appreciation. The site also highlights developments like Ambergris Woods and Grand Mayan, which offer unique amenities such as water features and larger lot sizes, further enhancing property value.

### **Prestige Realty & Development Ltd**

Prestige Realty & Development Ltd is a Belizean-owned real estate company specializing in luxury properties across Belize. Their portfolio includes beachfront estates, private islands, fertile farmlands, upscale hotels, commercial buildings, condos, resorts, and residential lots. With a history of facilitating numerous high-value transactions, they cater to both modest and grand property needs. Their team comprises expert advisors, including attorneys, land surveyors, contractors, and industry insiders, ensuring comprehensive support throughout the real estate process.

The company emphasizes customer satisfaction, transparency, and unbiased guidance for both buyers and sellers. They employ strategic advertising campaigns targeting local and international markets, enhancing property visibility. Through partnerships with global real estate entities, they ensure maximum exposure for listed properties.

### **Ceiba Realty & Development**

Ceiba Realty & Development is a Belizean real estate company specializing in inland properties. Founded in 2004 by Jonathan Lohr, a native Belizean, the company operates primarily in the Cayo District, offering a diverse portfolio that includes tropical homes, waterfront properties, private islands, commercial investments, and large acreages. The company emphasizes personalized service, guiding clients through the entire real estate process—from initial inquiries to finalizing transactions. In addition to property sales, Ceiba Realty has developed several residential communities. Notable developments include River Pointe Estates, an 88-acre community with 32 two-acre lots along the Belize River, and Xunan Vista, a gated community offering half-acre homesites near the Xunantunich Mayan Temple.

Ceiba Realty's commitment to client satisfaction and deep understanding of the Belizean real estate market make it a valuable resource for those interested in investing in Belize.

### **ClearWater Properties**

ClearWater Properties Belize offers luxurious oceanfront real estate developments on Ambergris Caye, near San Pedro, Belize. Their portfolio includes modern two-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bathroom condos and villas with stunning Caribbean Sea views. Notable properties are Clearwater Belize, featuring upscale condos and villas; Coconuts Caribe, an intimate condominium with 12 units overlooking the San Pedro lagoon; and Mangrove Bay, comprising duplexes with private

amenities like garages, boat slips, and rooftop spaces.

With over three decades of real estate development experience in Belize, including projects like Grand Caribe Resort and The Five, ClearWater Properties Belize emphasizes European-inspired decor, modern design elements, and top-tier finishes. Their developments provide private, resort-style amenities, offering both permanent residence and investment opportunities. Situated along Belize's most breathtaking ocean fronts, these properties seamlessly blend luxury living with the natural beauty of the region.

### **ECI Development**

ECI Development is a real estate development company that has been operating in Central and Latin America for over 26 years, creating people-centered, vibrant communities. The company offers a variety of investment properties in Latin America for retirees, real estate investors, digital nomads, and second homeowners. By adhering to North American building standards, ECI Development ensures that living in Latin America can provide the desired lifestyle at significantly lower costs compared to the US or Canada—in fact, almost half. The company's mission is to be the leading real estate development, hospitality, and investment company throughout Latin America, known for creating people-centric communities and vibrant vacation resorts. ECI Development's properties range from standard homes and communities to more minimalist, eco-friendly tiny homes, catering to the diverse needs of its clientele. With properties across Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama, ECI Development is committed to providing high-quality homes and condominiums that meet the standards North Americans have come to expect

### **Vision Properties**

Vision Properties Belize is a full-service development and property management company with over 15 years of experience in Southern Belize. They specialize in creating and managing luxury private island resorts and high-end waterfront villas in Placencia, Belize. Their portfolio includes successful projects like The Enclave on Placencia Caye, a private island paradise designed for large groups seeking an exclusive Caribbean experience.

Another notable development is the Sunset Gecko Condos, four newly constructed oceanfront units offering modern amenities and stunning views of the Caribbean Sea.

In addition to development, Vision Properties offers comprehensive property management services, ensuring that each property is maintained to the highest standards. Their in-house team includes mechanics, electricians, carpenters, managers, reservations staff, concierge, and drivers, all dedicated to providing exceptional service. This commitment to quality and attention to detail has established Vision Properties as a leader in luxury island and villa development in Placencia.

### **Prime Belize Real Estate**

Prime Belize Real Estate, established in 2023, is a partnership of seasoned real estate professionals with extensive experience in Belize's property market. The company's innovative approach to real estate emphasizes modern technology and automation, moving beyond traditional methods. Prime Belize offers a comprehensive range of services, including free detailed property valuation reports and a robust local and international marketing network. Their key focus areas encompass the Placencia Peninsula, various islands within the Barrier Reef, the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, the Coastal Road Area, and the Hummingbird Highway. This strategic focus ensures clients have access to prime properties across Belize's most sought-after locations.

### **Luna Realty Belize**

Luna Realty Belize is a boutique real estate firm specializing in the vibrant Belizean market, particularly on Ambergris Caye. The company offers a diverse portfolio, including residential properties, off-grid homes, undeveloped land, and commercial investments. Their expertise extends to developments like Aruna Belize, a canal-front community emphasizing eco-friendly living, and Turquoise Seas, a boutique condo project near Secret Beach. Luna Realty's commitment to client satisfaction is evident in their personalized approach, guiding clients through the intricacies of Belizean real estate to find properties that align with their aspirations.

# CHALLENGES IN SUSTAINABLE REAL ESTATE AND TOURISM

## **ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION**

Belize, renowned for its rich biodiversity and the world's second-largest barrier reef, faces significant environmental challenges. In recent years, the country has grappled with various forms of environmental degradation, including deforestation, coastal erosion, coral reef decline, and the impacts of climate change.

Deforestation remains a pressing concern in Belize. Between 2002 and 2023, the country experienced a 13% decrease in its primary forest area, losing approximately 148,000 hectares. This loss is primarily attributed to agricultural expansion, illegal logging, and infrastructural development. The deforestation not only threatens biodiversity but also disrupts the livelihoods of indigenous communities who depend on forest resources.

Coastal ecosystems, particularly mangrove forests, are also under threat. Mangroves play a crucial role in protecting shorelines from erosion, supporting fisheries, and sequestering carbon. However, unsustainable coastal development and mangrove deforestation have led to significant habitat loss. A study highlighted that Belize's mangrove cover declined by 2% over a 30-year period, with higher rates of loss near major coastal settlements like Belize City and San Pedro.

The Belize Barrier Reef, a UNESCO World Heritage site, has faced numerous challenges. In 2009, it was added to UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger due to threats from mangrove deforestation, unsustainable coastal development, and offshore oil exploration. Although efforts have been made to protect the reef, it continues to face pressures from climate change, overfishing, and pollution.

Climate change exacerbates these environmental issues. Rising sea levels contribute to coastal erosion and flooding, threatening both natural habitats and human settlements. In May 2024, extreme rising temperatures and prolonged dry spells led to wildfires that devastated Maya community forests and agricultural lands in southern Belize, jeopardizing both the environment and the livelihoods of local communities.

## **LAND OWNERSHIP AND TITLE ISSUES**

Belize's complex land tenure systems and instances of unclear property titles have posed challenges, potentially deterring some investors. Understanding these intricacies is crucial for anyone considering property investment in Belize.

Belize's land tenure system is multifaceted, reflecting its colonial history and diverse legal influences. The primary forms of land ownership include fee simple, leasehold, and strata titles. Fee simple ownership, also known as freehold, grants absolute ownership rights, allowing the owner to use, transfer, or bequeath the property without restrictions. This form of ownership is highly attractive to investors seeking long-term security. Leasehold ownership involves holding property for a specified period, after which ownership reverts to the original owner. Strata titles pertain to ownership within multi-unit developments, such as condominiums, where individuals own specific units and share common areas.

Despite the availability of these ownership structures, challenges arise due to historical land distribution practices and administrative inefficiencies. During colonial times, land was often allocated without comprehensive surveys, leading to overlapping claims and disputes. Additionally, the transition from a deed-based system to a registered land system

has been gradual, resulting in inconsistencies and gaps in records. These factors contribute to unclear property titles, making it difficult for potential buyers to ascertain legitimate ownership.

The Belizean government has recognized these issues and undertaken initiatives to modernize land administration. A significant development was the implementation of the Landfolio system, an integrated land tenure system designed to streamline land records and transactions. This system has reduced the average time to register a property transaction from 39 days to five days, enhancing efficiency and transparency.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist. Instances of fraudulent land sales and multiple claims on the same property have been reported, underscoring the importance of thorough due diligence. Prospective investors are advised to engage experienced real estate agents and legal professionals familiar with Belizean property laws to navigate these complexities effectively.

Foreign investors should also be aware of specific regulations governing property ownership. While Belize generally allows foreigners to own property outright, certain restrictions apply, particularly concerning land near national borders and in designated protected areas. Understanding these regulations is essential to ensure compliance and avoid potential legal complications.

### **ACCESS TO FINANCING**

Securing funding for real estate projects in Belize presents unique challenges, particularly for foreign investors unfamiliar with the local financial landscape. Belize's banking system differs significantly from those in more developed countries, often leading to complexities in obtaining traditional financing. However, various alternative financing options are available, each with distinct advantages and considerations.

Traditional bank financing in Belize is less accessible to non-residents. Local banks, such as Belize Bank, Atlantic Bank, and Heritage Bank, typically offer mortgage services primarily to residents. These institutions may require a stable source of income within Belize, a satisfactory credit history, and a reasonable debt-to-income ratio. Additionally, down payments often range from 10% to 20% of the property's purchase price, with interest rates between 10% and 18%. The loan terms are usually short, with fixed terms of only 12 months, necessitating annual renewals at prevailing market rates. This structure can be burdensome for foreign investors accustomed to longer-term financing options.

Offshore financing offers an alternative for non-residents seeking to invest in Belizean real estate. Offshore banks provide mortgage loans to non-resident individuals and International Business Companies (IBCs) with more favorable terms than local banks. Loan terms can range from 5 to 30 years, with interest rates comparable to prevailing market rates. However, down payment requirements remain high, with most offshore banks lending at a maximum of 60% loan-to-value (LTV), necessitating a down payment of at least 40%. A significant advantage of offshore lending is the ability to choose the currency of the loan, facilitating transactions conducted in U.S. dollars, which is beneficial given that many real estate transactions in Belize are conducted in USD.

Owner financing, also known as seller financing, is a prevalent and convenient method for acquiring real estate in Belize. In this arrangement, the seller offers financing to the buyer, allowing for more flexible terms tailored to both parties' needs. Typical terms include a down payment of 30% to 40%, interest rates between 5% and 10%, and loan durations ranging from 5 to 10 years. The seller-finance loan agreement is filed along with transfer and deed forms with the Lands Department in Belize to protect both buyers and sellers. The title transfer is completed once the final payment has been made, ensuring security for both parties involved.

Co-investing is another strategy that foreign investors can consider. This approach involves partnering with other investors or investing in a private Belizean company that acquires investment properties through pooled funds or secured financing. Co-investing allows individuals to participate in the real estate market without the complexities of securing financing independently. By pooling resources, investors can access larger or more lucrative properties and share the associated risks and returns. This method also provides an opportunity to leverage local expertise and navigate the Belizean real estate market more effectively.

It's important to note that while these alternative financing options provide viable pathways for foreign investors, they also come with specific considerations. For instance, owner financing agreements should be meticulously structured to protect both parties' interests. Engaging legal professionals familiar with Belizean property law is advisable to ensure compliance and safeguard investments. Similarly, co-investing requires clear agreements outlining each party's responsibilities, profit-sharing arrangements, and exit strategies to prevent potential disputes.

Foreign investors should also be aware of Belize's property ownership laws and tax implications. Belize offers favorable conditions for foreign property ownership, granting the same rights to foreigners as to Belizean citizens. There are no capital gains or inheritance taxes, and property taxes are relatively low, making it an attractive destination for real estate investment. However, conducting thorough due diligence is crucial to ensure clear title and to identify any existing liens or encumbrances on the property.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS**

Belize has implemented stringent environmental regulations to safeguard its ecological heritage. These laws, while essential for environmental preservation, have significant implications for real estate development, often extending project timelines and increasing associated costs.

Central to Belize's environmental regulatory framework is the Environmental Protection Act, Chapter 328, Revised Edition 2020. This Act mandates that any proposed development likely to impact the environment undergo a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA process involves a detailed evaluation of potential environmental effects, public consultations, and the formulation of mitigation strategies to address identified impacts. The Department of the Environment (DOE) oversees this process, ensuring that developments align with national environmental standards.

The EIA process is multifaceted and can be time-consuming. Developers are required to submit detailed project proposals, conduct baseline environmental studies, and engage with stakeholders through public consultations. The DOE reviews these submissions meticulously, which can lead to extended approval timelines. For instance, projects situated near sensitive ecosystems, such as the Belize Barrier Reef System, may face additional scrutiny to prevent ecological degradation.

Compliance with environmental regulations also entails financial considerations. The costs associated with conducting EIAs, implementing mitigation measures, and adhering to environmental compliance plans can be substantial. Developers must budget for expenses related to environmental consultants, specialized studies, and potential project modifications to meet regulatory requirements. Moreover, the Environmental Protection Act empowers the DOE to impose fines and penalties for non-compliance, further emphasizing the importance of adhering to environmental standards.

In addition to the EIA requirements, Belize enforces regulations concerning waste management, pollution control, and the use of natural resources. The Environmental Protection (Effluent Limitations) Regulations, for example, establish standards for the discharge of effluents into water bodies, necessitating that developments incorporate appropriate waste treatment systems. Non-compliance with these regulations can result in enforcement actions, including cessation orders and mandatory remediation efforts.

The emphasis on environmental compliance reflects Belize's commitment to sustainable development. By enforcing rigorous environmental standards, the country aims to balance economic growth with the preservation of its natural resources. This approach not only protects biodiversity but also supports sectors such as tourism and fisheries, which are integral to Belize's economy.

For real estate developers, navigating Belize's environmental regulations requires strategic planning and a proactive approach. Engaging with environmental consultants early in the project lifecycle can facilitate the identification of potential environmental concerns and the development of effective mitigation strategies. Additionally, maintaining open communication with regulatory authorities and stakeholders can aid in addressing issues promptly, thereby minimizing delays.

While the regulatory landscape presents challenges, it also offers opportunities for developers to contribute to Belize's sustainability goals. Incorporating eco-friendly designs, utilizing renewable energy sources, and implementing conservation practices can enhance a project's environmental credentials and appeal to environmentally conscious consumers. Furthermore, developments that align with environmental standards may benefit from incentives or favorable considerations from regulatory bodies.

### **BALANCING DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION**

Balancing development and cultural preservation in Belize present a multifaceted challenge for developers, policymakers, and communities. As the nation seeks economic growth through infrastructure projects and tourism, it must also safeguard its rich cultural heritage, which includes ancient Maya sites, colonial architecture, and diverse indigenous traditions. This delicate equilibrium requires thoughtful strategies that integrate development with cultural conservation.

Belize's cultural heritage is a cornerstone of its national identity and a significant draw for tourism, a major economic driver. The country is home to numerous Maya archaeological sites, such as El Pilar, which spans the Belize-Guatemala border and encompasses over 25 plazas and hundreds of major buildings across approximately 120 acres. El Pilar is notable for its extensive forest gardens, maintained by Maya farmers as part of the El Pilar Forest Garden Network, reflecting a sustainable approach to cultural preservation.

In recent years, Belize has undertaken initiatives to preserve its cultural heritage while promoting sustainable development. The Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance (BVAR) Project, established in 1988, exemplifies this approach by integrating archaeological research with heritage management. The project focuses on the preservation of ancient monuments, the integration of archaeology and tourism development, and cultural heritage education. Over its 32-year history, BVAR has emphasized training Belizeans as professional archaeologists and conservators, aiming to cultivate the next generation of advocates for Belize's heritage management.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Urbanization and infrastructure development often threaten the physical integrity of historical sites and disrupt intangible cultural practices. The "Belize City Urban Cultural Heritage in Young Hands Project" addresses these issues by engaging youth in the preservation of urban cultural heritage. The project aims to equip young individuals with the knowledge and skills to become community urban cultural heritage preservation practitioners, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility toward their cultural assets.

Another significant challenge is the decolonization of cultural heritage policy. Following its independence in 1981, Belize has been working to overcome the lingering effects of colonialism. The 2016 National Cultural Policy reflects efforts to create a new national identity through the development of cultural heritage. However, the focus has often been on ancient Maya civilization, with less emphasis on Creole and other cultural heritages. Assessing the decolonization of cultural heritage policy involves analyzing narratives presented at colonial sites and ensuring that the values of all Belizeans drive the creation of a national identity.

The integration of cultural preservation with economic development is further exemplified by the Fahina project, a collaboration with the Sarstoon-Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM). Supported by a grant from the Caribbean Development Bank's Cultural and Creative Industries Innovation Fund, the project revitalizes the intricate art of Mayan embroidery, transforming it into a viable economic opportunity for Mayan women. Since its fashion brand launch in 2021, Fahina has seen considerable success, with the number of women involved growing steadily and the offerings diversifying from traditional embroidered clothing to include accessories such as purses.

Environmental conservation also plays a crucial role in cultural preservation. The Maya Mountains, for instance, contain important Mayan ruins, including sites like Lubaantun and Nim Li Punit. Conservation efforts in these areas have been geared towards regulating activities such as logging to protect both natural and cultural resources. However, unauthorized farming and resource extraction by individuals from neighboring countries have been identified as significant threats to Belize's protected areas bordering Peten. In 2008, an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 xateros (fishtail palm foragers) were operating in the region, leading to the clearing of approximately 13,500 to 20,000 acres for various agricultural activities by 2011. These activities have severed the

ecologically important contiguity of Belizean forests to the Guatemalan Selva Maya and have led to declines in wildlife populations, such as the white-lipped peccary, which has been extirpated from areas like Chiquibul.

To address these challenges, Belize has engaged in international collaborations. In 2022, the U.S. Embassy in Belize welcomed Dr. Andrew Zonderman, an officer of the Cultural Heritage Center at the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, to assist in preserving Belize's cultural heritage. Dr. Zonderman conducted site visits and research at archaeological sites across the country and met with various Belizean stakeholders in government, law enforcement, academia, and civil society. This collaboration supports the Cultural Property Agreement between the U.S. and Belize, which promotes transparency, accountability, economic development, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

## **MARKET VOLATILITY**

The real estate market in Belize has experienced notable fluctuations in recent years, influenced by global economic conditions, domestic policies, and evolving investor preferences. Understanding these dynamics requires a comprehensive analysis of market trends, investment drivers, and future projections.

Belize's appeal as a real estate destination is multifaceted. Its tropical climate, English-speaking population, and favorable legal framework for foreign property ownership make it attractive to international investors and retirees. The country's proximity to North America, with direct flights from major U.S. and Canadian cities, further enhances its accessibility. Additionally, Belize's commitment to environmental conservation and its rich cultural heritage contribute to its unique charm.

In recent years, the Belizean real estate market has demonstrated resilience amid global economic uncertainties. The COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted economies worldwide, had a significant impact on Belize's tourism-dependent economy. However, the real estate sector showed adaptability, with a shift in demand patterns. While tourism-related properties faced challenges due to travel restrictions, there was an increased interest in residential properties from individuals seeking relocation or investment opportunities in less densely populated areas.

Data from the Global Property Guide indicates that in 2023, the Central Bank of Belize reported a 7% year-on-year growth in inward foreign direct investments, reaching BZD 443.4 million (USD 221.7 million), primarily concentrated in real estate, construction, hotel, and restaurant sectors. This influx of investment underscores the sustained confidence in Belize's real estate market.

The residential real estate market in Belize is projected to reach a value of US\$8.14 billion in 2024, with an expected annual growth rate (CAGR 2024-2029) of 4.84%, leading to a market volume of US\$10.31 billion by 2029. This growth is driven by several factors, including the country's stable political environment, favorable tax laws, and the growing tourism industry.

Tourism remains a pivotal driver of real estate demand in Belize. The country's natural attractions, such as the Belize Barrier Reef, ancient Maya ruins, and lush rainforests, continue to draw international visitors. In the first half of 2024, Belize welcomed 326,057 overnight tourists, a 26.5% increase compared to the same period in 2023 and 14.6% more than in 2019. This resurgence in tourism has positively impacted the demand for vacation rentals and investment properties in popular tourist destinations.

Specific regions within Belize have emerged as real estate hotspots. Ambergris Caye, the largest island in the country, is known for its dynamic market and significant growth potential. The island's community, beaches, and proximity to the Belize Barrier Reef make it a leading real estate investment destination. Placencia Peninsula, situated on the southern coast, is another favored location along the shoreline, recognized for its relaxed atmosphere. Caye Caulker, a smaller island, is more affordable than Ambergris Caye and Placencia, appealing to those seeking a more laid-back lifestyle. Inland, the Cayo District is gaining popularity, presenting opportunities for eco-friendly living with a wide choice of properties for different budget ranges.

The demand for luxury properties has also seen an uptick. In 2023, homes under the \$300,000 mark witnessed heightened demand. However, projections for 2024 indicate a surge in interest for more luxury homes, fueling a shift towards land banking for custom properties and an increased interest

in condominiums. This trend is attributed to the influx of high-net-worth individuals and retirees from North America and Europe seeking exclusive and secure living environments.

Belize's government has implemented policies to attract foreign investment in the real estate sector. The Qualified Retirement Program (QRP) offers benefits to eligible expatriates, including tax exemptions on income received outside of Belize, capital gains tax, and inheritance tax, as well as certain import duties. This program has been instrumental in drawing retirees and investors to the country.

Despite the positive trends, challenges persist. The absence of a centralized Multiple Listing Service (MLS) or publicly accessible real estate transaction records system complicates comprehensive market analysis. Additionally, the consistent risk during the Atlantic hurricane season from June to November poses challenges to property investments. However, targeted government efforts to bring in investments combined with the country's favorable location help maintain Belize's attractiveness and competitiveness among other Central American markets.

Looking ahead, the Belizean real estate market is poised for continued growth. The projected annual growth rate of 4.84% from 2024 to 2029 indicates a robust market trajectory. The ongoing recovery of the tourism sector, coupled with government incentives and a stable economic environment, positions Belize as a compelling destination for real estate investment.

### **ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY**

In Belize, the construction industry plays a pivotal role in the nation's economic development, contributing significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, limited access to advanced construction technologies has impeded the efficiency and quality of development projects, posing challenges to sustainable growth and infrastructure improvement.

The construction sector's contribution to Belize's GDP has exhibited fluctuations over recent years. In the first quarter of 2023, the industry grew by 28.4%, reaching \$81.3 million, up from \$63.3 million in the same period of 2022. This growth reflects increased investments in building and construction activities. Despite this positive trend, the sector's overall efficiency and output quality remain constrained by the limited adoption of modern construction technologies.

One of the primary challenges is the reliance on traditional construction methods, which often result in longer project timelines and higher labor costs. The absence of advanced machinery and equipment means that many tasks are performed manually, leading to inefficiencies and increased susceptibility to human error. For instance, the lack of mechanized earth-moving equipment can delay site preparation, while manual bricklaying and plastering extend construction durations.

Additionally, the scarcity of Building Information Modeling (BIM) and other digital tools hampers project planning and management. BIM facilitates the creation of digital representations of physical and functional characteristics of places, enabling better visualization, coordination, and decision-making. Without such tools, project stakeholders may face difficulties in identifying potential issues early, leading to cost overruns and delays.

The limited access to prefabrication and modular construction techniques further affects the sector's efficiency. These methods allow for components to be manufactured off-site under controlled conditions and then assembled on-site, reducing construction time and improving quality control. In Belize, the adoption of such techniques is minimal, resulting in prolonged construction periods and inconsistent quality standards.

Financial constraints also play a significant role in the limited adoption of advanced technologies. The initial investment required for modern equipment and training can be substantial, deterring small and medium-sized construction firms from upgrading their operations. Moreover, access to financing is often limited, with high-interest rates and stringent lending criteria posing additional barriers.

The regulatory environment presents another challenge. While efforts have been made to update building codes and standards, the enforcement of these regulations remains inconsistent. In 2021, the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing announced plans to amend the Belize

Building Act and adjust the schedule of fees and guidelines governing construction activities. However, the effective implementation and enforcement of these regulations are crucial to ensure that construction practices align with modern standards and incorporate advanced technologies.

The workforce's skill level is another critical factor. The construction industry in Belize faces a shortage of skilled labor, particularly in areas requiring expertise in modern construction techniques and technologies. This skills gap limits the industry's capacity to adopt and effectively utilize advanced tools and methods. Training programs and educational initiatives are essential to equip workers with the necessary skills to operate new technologies and improve overall project outcomes.

Environmental considerations also underscore the need for advanced construction technologies. Belize is vulnerable to natural disasters such as hurricanes and floods, which can devastate poorly constructed buildings and infrastructure. Implementing resilient construction practices and materials is vital to enhance the durability and safety of structures. Advanced technologies can facilitate the design and construction of buildings that withstand environmental stresses, thereby reducing maintenance costs and enhancing public safety.

The limited access to advanced construction technologies in Belize has broader economic implications. Inefficient construction practices can lead to higher project costs, which are often passed on to consumers and businesses. This situation can deter investment and slow economic growth. Furthermore, substandard infrastructure can impede other sectors, such as tourism and agriculture, which rely on reliable transportation and facilities.

### **SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS**

Belize's construction industry is significantly dependent on imported materials, a reliance that has led to notable delays and increased costs, particularly during periods of global supply chain disruptions. This dependency has been highlighted in recent years, as the country navigated challenges stemming from international trade fluctuations and logistical bottlenecks.

In 2023, Belize's total imports were valued at approximately \$2.451 billion, marking a 3.5% decrease from the previous year's \$2.541 billion. This decline was observed across various commodity categories, including 'Manufactured Goods,' which fell by \$25.3 million, from \$368.5 million in 2022 to \$343.2 million in 2023. This category encompasses essential construction materials such as steel pipes and corrugated carton boxes, indicating a reduction in the importation of critical building supplies.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges by disrupting global supply chains, leading to increased shipping costs and delays. In November 2021, Belize experienced an inflation rate of 5.7%, the highest in over a decade, primarily due to elevated shipping costs resulting from supply-chain bottlenecks. Shipping costs surged from a pre-pandemic average of about US\$2,500 to approximately US\$10,000, representing a 300% increase.

These disruptions have had a direct impact on construction projects in Belize. Contractors have faced difficulties in procuring necessary materials, leading to project delays and cost overruns. The limited availability of materials and equipment has been a significant issue, as production levels struggled to meet the surge in demand following the pandemic-induced slowdown.

The construction sector's reliance on imported materials makes it particularly vulnerable to global supply chain issues. For instance, in 2023, imports of 'Mineral Fuels and Lubricants' decreased by \$49.1 million, from \$414 million in 2022 to \$364.9 million in 2023, due to lower world market prices and a reduction in the quantities of premium fuel imported. Such fluctuations in import volumes and prices can disrupt construction schedules and budgets, as fuel is essential for operating machinery and transporting materials.

To mitigate these challenges, stakeholders in Belize's construction industry are exploring strategies to enhance supply chain resilience. One approach is diversifying suppliers to reduce dependence on a single source or country. This strategy, known as dual sourcing or "supplier + 1," involves incorporating an additional supplier from the same or a different location to satisfy a portion of the supply requirement. According to a Gartner supply chain survey, 57% of companies are adopting this approach to enhance resilience.

Another strategy is increasing inventory levels to buffer against supply chain disruptions. A McKinsey survey revealed that 71% of respondents expect to revise their inventory policies to ensure resilience while keeping costs under control. However, this approach requires careful planning to balance the costs associated with holding additional inventory against the benefits of improved supply chain stability.

The Belizean government is also taking steps to address these challenges. In the "Delivering on Plan Belize" budget presentation, the government acknowledged the impact of global supply chain disruptions on the local economy and emphasized the need for strategic planning to mitigate these effects. This includes investing in infrastructure to improve logistics and exploring opportunities to develop local manufacturing capabilities for construction materials.

Developing local manufacturing capabilities could reduce the construction industry's reliance on imported materials, thereby mitigating the impact of global supply chain disruptions. However, establishing such capabilities requires significant investment in technology, skills development, and infrastructure. It also necessitates a thorough analysis of the local market to ensure that locally produced materials can compete with imports in terms of quality and cost.

In the meantime, construction companies in Belize are adopting various measures to cope with supply chain challenges. These include collaborating closely with suppliers to secure materials in advance, exploring alternative materials or suppliers, and adjusting project timelines to accommodate delays. Some companies are also investing in digital tools to enhance supply chain visibility and improve planning and forecasting capabilities.

### **MARKET SATURATION**

In recent years, Belize has emerged as a sought-after destination for real estate investment, attracting both expatriates and investors drawn to its natural beauty, favorable tax environment, and relatively low cost of living. However, this surge in interest has led to an oversupply of properties in popular areas, resulting in increased competition and reduced profitability for property owners and investors.

The Belizean real estate market has experienced significant growth over the past decade. According to data from Statista, the real estate transaction value in Belize was projected to increase by approximately 26.8% from 2024 to 2029, reaching an estimated \$78.07 million USD by 2029. This upward trend reflects a consistent rise in property transactions, driven by both local and foreign demand.

A substantial portion of this demand has been concentrated in popular tourist destinations such as Ambergris Caye, Placencia, and Caye Caulker. These areas have seen a proliferation of new developments, including condominiums, vacation homes, and commercial properties aimed at catering to the tourism industry. For instance, in July 2024, Ambergris Caye had 412 active real estate listings, comprising 47 homes, 73 condos, 89 waterfront land parcels, and 203 off-beach land parcels.

While the increase in property listings indicates a vibrant market, it also signals a potential oversupply. The abundance of available properties has intensified competition among sellers and landlords, leading to downward pressure on prices and rental rates. This scenario is particularly evident in the condominium market, where the average listing price in Ambergris Caye was \$463,252 USD in July 2024. Despite these prices, the sheer volume of available units has made it challenging for sellers to achieve their desired returns.

The oversupply issue is further compounded by the seasonal nature of Belize's tourism industry. The peak tourist season typically runs from November to April, during which demand for rental properties is high. However, during the off-peak months, occupancy rates can decline sharply, leaving property owners with vacant units and reduced income. This cyclical demand exacerbates the challenges posed by an oversaturated market.

Additionally, the global economic climate has influenced the profitability of real estate investments in Belize. Inflationary pressures in major economies have led investors to seek assets that can hedge against inflation. While real estate is traditionally considered a good hedge, the oversupply in Belize's popular areas has diluted this advantage. Property values and rental incomes have not



kept pace with inflation rates, resulting in diminished real returns for investors.

The Belizean government's policies have also played a role in shaping the real estate landscape. Efforts to attract foreign investment through favorable tax laws and the promotion of the tourism sector have spurred development. However, without adequate planning and regulation, these initiatives have contributed to the oversupply problem. The lack of a centralized Multiple Listing Service (MLS) in Belize makes it difficult for investors to access accurate and up-to-date information on property listings and market trends, further complicating investment decisions.

To address the challenges arising from oversupply, stakeholders in Belize's real estate market may consider several strategies. Diversifying the types of properties available, such as focusing on eco-friendly developments or affordable housing, could attract a broader range of buyers and tenants. Enhancing infrastructure and amenities in less-developed areas may also help distribute demand more evenly across the country, alleviating pressure on popular regions.

Moreover, implementing more robust market data collection and reporting mechanisms would provide investors with the information needed to make informed decisions. This transparency could help balance supply and demand, leading to more sustainable growth in the real estate sector.

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

Challenge	Objective	Solutions
Environmental Degradation	Establish comprehensive, proactive environmental management systems to preserve ecosystems while supporting development	<p><b>Integrated Environmental Monitoring Platform (IEMP)</b> Develop a national platform that integrates remote sensing, IoT sensors, and environmental data analytics. The IEMP will use satellite imagery for broad environmental impact visualization, while localized IoT sensors monitor real-time data on air quality, water levels, and biodiversity health. This platform should utilize machine learning models to forecast potential environmental degradation based on project activities and alert authorities for timely intervention.</p> <p><b>Green Infrastructure Bonds with Risk-Adjusted Requirements</b> Introduce a tiered bond structure based on environmental sensitivity and development impact. High-risk projects in ecologically sensitive zones should pay higher bond amounts that cover the full cost of potential restoration. A third-party environmental auditor will evaluate compliance and bond amounts, ensuring bonds are adequate for restoration or preservation activities. A robust performance-tracking system should be implemented to ensure compliance, with bonds only released upon project completion that meets environmental standards.</p> <p><b>Ecosystem Service Valuation and Biodiversity Offset Banking</b> Use a sophisticated valuation model to quantify ecosystem services affected by developments (e.g., water filtration, carbon sequestration) and require developers to fund biodiversity offset banks. Offset banks create a structured system where developers contribute to high-priority ecological projects that restore biodiversity and natural services. Offset contributions should be based on ecosystem-specific losses calculated through scientific metrics, ensuring a net-positive environmental impact.</p>

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Land  
Ownership  
and Title  
Issues

Create a secure, transparent, and accessible land ownership system to support reliable land tenure and reduce disputes

**Blockchain-Enabled Decentralized Land Registry with Automated Verification Protocols**

Implement a blockchain-based land registry where each title and transaction undergo automated verification through smart contracts. These contracts autonomously validate property details, reducing human error and tampering. The registry should include a user-friendly public portal for transparent verification and instant access to ownership records, with a tiered access model to protect sensitive data for governmental and judicial use.

**AI-Driven Historical Title Analysis for Dispute Resolution**

Employ AI models trained on historical land records and legal precedents to analyze and resolve land disputes efficiently. The system should include natural language processing (NLP) to interpret old records and legal texts, enabling the detection of inconsistencies or ownership issues across documents. This AI system will serve as a rapid, impartial intermediary, offering recommended outcomes based on historical trends and jurisdiction-specific rules.

**Inclusive Land Regularization Programs with Cultural and Economic Sensitivity**

Partner with NGOs, community leaders, and legal experts to create land regularization programs that respect indigenous and community-based land ownership customs. Implement multi-phase programs beginning with land-use mapping and participatory zoning. Follow up with legal clinics and advisory services that assist rural communities in navigating formal ownership processes without compromising customary land rights.

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Access to  
Financing

Expand and diversify financing options to increase capital access for sustainable real estate development

**Green Sector-Specific Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) with Environmental and Social Safeguards**

Design REITs tailored to different real estate sectors (e.g., commercial, residential, ecotourism) with strict ESG requirements. Investors receive tax incentives, and the REITs have annual ESG impact reporting obligations. Implement safeguards to ensure investor funds only support projects meeting green standards, with REITs audited by third-party ESG raters.

**Sustainable Finance Advisory Council with Global Green Finance Integration**

Establish a high-level advisory council comprising representatives from multilateral financial institutions, ESG experts, and policymakers. This council will guide developers in structuring projects for green finance qualification, offering workshops, proposal templates, and direct connections to green funds like the Green Climate Fund and Climate Bonds Initiative. Implementing a web portal can provide developers with resources and tools for financing compliance with international standards.

**Carbon Credit Monetization Program via Verified Emissions Reductions (VERs)**

Create a program where developers can earn carbon credits through verified emissions reduction activities (e.g., green building materials, energy-efficient design). Credits should be validated by third-party bodies (e.g., Verra or Gold Standard) and tradeable on global carbon markets. Establish a dedicated platform that calculates, certifies, and lists these credits, creating a revenue stream for developers directly tied to their environmental performance.

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**Environmental Regulations**

Establish data-driven, adaptive regulations that ensure sustainable development practices across all sectors

**Dynamic Compliance System (DCS) Driven by Real-Time Environmental Data Analytics**

Create a DCS that adjusts regulatory standards based on real-time environmental data, responding dynamically to project activities. The system should use predictive modeling and machine learning to forecast potential violations and proactively adjust thresholds in high-impact zones. Compliance checkpoints, set by monitoring data, ensure consistent standards and adjust penalties based on ecological sensitivity and project scale.

**Multi-Stakeholder Environmental Accountability Council with Real-Time Reporting Requirements**

Form a council including government officials, private developers, scientific advisors, and local community representatives. The council will review and refine regulations based on real-time project data, public input, and annual environmental impact reports. Require council decisions and environmental audits to be published in real-time on a publicly accessible platform, allowing citizens to monitor environmental compliance.

**Third-Party, AI-Assisted Environmental Audits with Open Data Access**

Mandate third-party audits for all large-scale developments, using AI to analyze compliance with carbon, water, and biodiversity standards. This system should leverage data analytics to detect anomalies, flagging potential non-compliance for further investigation. Audit findings must be reported in an open data format, allowing researchers and NGOs to conduct independent analyses, adding an additional layer of public accountability.

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**Balancing Development and Cultural Preservation**

Integrate cultural heritage into development processes to preserve identity and ensure community benefits

**Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) with Continuous Community Feedback Loops**

Mandate CHIAs that not only assess impact but integrate ongoing feedback from local communities, anthropologists, and cultural experts. This system should utilize a longitudinal approach, with assessments at multiple development stages and feedback loops enabling communities to adjust project impacts over time. Reports from CHIAs should be publicly accessible, promoting transparency.

**Community-Driven Benefit-Sharing Agreements with Culturally Sensitive Performance Metrics**

Create legally binding agreements that allocate a percentage of project revenue to fund community-based projects, such as educational programs or cultural preservation initiatives. These agreements should include performance indicators tied to community well-being and satisfaction surveys, ensuring developers are held accountable for community impacts.

**Localized, Heritage-Focused Design Codes with Architectural and Historical Review Panels**

Require development projects in culturally sensitive areas to adhere to design codes that align with local aesthetics, materials, and building techniques. A multi-disciplinary review panel of architects, historians, and local leaders will review and approve plans based on strict adherence to cultural preservation criteria, issuing public-facing reports on project alignment with cultural goals.

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**Market  
Volatility**

Establish financial stabilizers to mitigate economic shocks, diversifying investments to maintain resilience

**Market Risk Forecasting Model with AI-Enhanced Economic Indicators**

Develop a predictive model that utilizes AI and machine learning algorithms to analyze macroeconomic data, foreign exchange rates, commodity prices, and other market factors that could impact real estate. The model should generate real-time risk scores and suggest stabilization measures based on projected market volatility trends.

**Crisis-Responsive Real Estate Stabilization Fund with Government Matching**

Establish a stabilization fund into which developers and financial institutions contribute during economic upswings. In economic downturns, the fund provides low-interest loans and emergency liquidity for ongoing projects. The government can match contributions during boom periods to increase fund size, with clear criteria for fund access during crises.

**Sectoral Investment Diversification Program with Adaptive Incentives**

Create a program encouraging developers to diversify investments across sectors, such as affordable housing, eco-tourism, and green commercial spaces. Provide adaptive incentives based on market data, rewarding developers for cross-sector investments with tax breaks and flexible financing options, helping balance market saturation risks across the sector.

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**Access to  
Technology**

Enhance digital and technological resources available to developers to drive sustainable innovation

**National Real Estate Innovation Hubs with Embedded Tech Advisors**

Establish government-supported hubs providing access to advanced technologies such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), GIS, and Virtual Reality (VR) tools. Hubs should host regular training programs and include on-site technical advisors who offer guidance on integrating digital solutions in sustainable building practices. The hub should serve as a one-stop shop for emerging technologies, accessible to small- and medium-sized developers.

**Predictive Infrastructure Analytics Platform Using AI**

Create an AI-based platform that analyzes environmental, geological, and infrastructural data to anticipate challenges and optimize development plans. The platform would provide developers with risk forecasts based on location and environmental factors, enabling proactive adjustments to project plans and reducing costly redesigns due to unforeseen issues.

**Partnership-Based Technology Subsidy Programs for Affordable Software Access**

Encourage partnerships with technology firms to offer software as a service (SaaS) models for real estate technologies. Develop a subsidy program where developers receive technology grants covering up to 50% of software costs, allowing developers at all levels to utilize state-of-the-art tools without significant capital investment.

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**Supply Chain Disruptions** Establish resilient, locally sourced supply chains with contingency planning for uninterrupted project flow

**Sectoral Supply Chain Resilience Task Force with Cross-Border Partnerships**

Form a task force dedicated to analyzing supply chain risks and establishing partnerships with regional suppliers, reducing reliance on distant imports. The task force should assess local capacity for material production and establish emergency stockpiling guidelines. Engage with neighboring countries for supply chain continuity agreements to support essential material flow during disruptions.

**Onshore Production Incentives for Green Construction Materials**

Introduce tax credits, low-interest loans, and government-backed guarantees for companies manufacturing green construction materials domestically, such as sustainable concrete, steel, and timber. Priority should be given to companies using recycled materials, creating a circular supply chain within Belize.

**AI-Powered Supply Chain Digital Twin with Predictive Disruption Alerts**

Use digital twin technology to simulate supply chain flows and identify vulnerabilities in real time. AI algorithms should continuously monitor variables such as weather patterns, transport data, and market prices to forecast disruptions. These simulations would enable developers to proactively adjust procurement strategies and maintain project timelines.

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**Market Saturation** Prevent oversupply and promote sustainable urban growth through adaptive and demand-responsive policies

**Real-Time Demand Forecasting and Adaptive Zoning Policy System**

Implement an AI-driven forecasting model that uses demographic, economic, and occupancy data to predict housing demand. Link this model with adaptive zoning policies, where zoning decisions are periodically updated based on current data to prevent overbuilding and address emerging housing needs.

**Comprehensive Adaptive Reuse Incentive Program for Urban Densification**

Offer significant tax credits, expedited permitting, and grants for developers who convert or repurpose existing structures into modern housing or commercial spaces, thus reducing the need for new construction. Establish a project evaluation committee that scores projects on environmental, social, and economic benefits, adjusting incentive levels accordingly.

**Controlled Permitting Based on Demand-Driven Indexes**

Design a permitting system where the issuance of permits is linked to real-time market demand indicators. Set permit caps in high-density areas to prevent over-saturation, with reviews conducted semi-annually. An independent advisory board will review permit issuance and provide data-backed recommendations to adjust limits based on shifts in market demand.

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