

NEWSLETTER

BELIZE ASSOCIATION OF PLANNERS



"Making Belize Sustainable"

INTRODUCING: BARBARA TILLET-ABDULHADI - BAP SECRETARY

The current State of Emergency in Belize, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has halted life as we knew it for many of us, including Barbara Tillett-AbdulHadi. Prior to the shut-down, she had been tutoring some of her nephews and a niece, in reading. Her selfless act may come as no surprise to those who know Mrs. Tillett AbdulHadi, particularly since she was once a teacher. Not so long ago, Barbara, as she's fondly known, also taught English as a Second Language (ESL), in the Middle East, where she once lived for several years.

But, she also has another passion; i.e. volunteering her expertise and knowledge with the Belize Association of Planners (BAP), of which she is also a founding member. After all, in the mid-90's Barbara spent over a decade working as a professional planner at both the Housing and Planning; and Lands Departments. Her desire is for people far and near, including her family and friends, to understand that BAP can provide loads of information to those interested in urban planning and development. "BAP connects people or agencies in development with those they can impact in a positive way, whether through information sharing, advocating policy, or direct community involvement," she explains.



The idea, for her and other founding members, was for BAP to provide a forum for planners to share ideas, experiences, and best practices to promote land-use and development planning. This, after it became evident that there were many unsustainable developments, conflicting land uses, and lack of community spaces. Barbara says, "We saw the role of planners was not being taken seriously and was most often usurped by other professionals like the surveyors and architects who were, most often, ill-equipped to fulfill the role." Since then, it is evident that the organization has seen growth, and the planning profession has earned respect, as seen by the number of professionals that have returned to take up prominent positions in the public and private sectors in Belize.

Notwithstanding the increase demands and pace of developments and advancements in data gathering and technology, such as GIS, GPS, and drones, and the fact that she and other members of BAP are forced to expand their knowledge base in order to better respond, in real time, to changing situations, Barbara says she feels privileged and excited to be able to "...make a difference, in some small way, by bringing awareness to development issues, and impact in a positive way, the lives of our Belizean citizenry." Her work has involved representing BAP at various forums and on committees where government professionals, private sector agencies and community groups meet to build relationships, share information and coordinate activities with an aim to reduce duplication of efforts and make the best use of available resources in forward planning for the organizations and communities they represent. Barbara has both technical and practical knowledge. "I represented BAP at focus groups and forums organized to coordinate and share ideas to use in sectoral and municipal development planning," she shares.

The mother of one boasts of the linkages that the organization has created with educational institutions, government agencies and other organizations that has influenced policy, as well as allowed them to provide guidance to municipality and community groups, which has helped to define and further plan their goals. These linkages would not have been possible, she confesses, had it not been for the stewardship and guidance of BAP's Executive Director, Carolyn Trench-Sandiford. "Carolyn is very passionate about the planning profession and the planner's role of being an active participant in helping to shape safe and thriving communities, improving the lives of people in them, especially those most vulnerable groups," Barbara reveals.

She is optimistic that despite the uncertainties brought on by the pandemic, BAP will continue to advocate for the role of planning in development. It is this same uncertainty that Barbara says has revealed the need for planning to be flexible and more responsive to changing situations. She explains that, "Shifting circumstances do not negate the importance of planning, but rather they emphasize the need to plan for best use of available resources in such a way as to reduce vulnerability in an uncertain future."

Mrs. Tillett-AbdulHadi encourages young people to see BAP as an opportunity to network and draw attention to their talents, which may allow them the chance to showcase their expertise with new technology and knowledge products, in order to bring attention to the practice and benefits of planning.

BAP Implements Contingency Plan after Belize Registers First COVID-19 Case



Belize registered its first COVID-19 case on March 23rd, 2020. Consequently, the nation became focused on precautionary and preventative measures to stem and to effectively manage the transmission of COVID-19 in our country.

The Belize Association of Planners, as did many state and non-state organizations, began the process of implementing contingency planning in a time of uncertainty. This required reviewing and re-scheduling of project deliverables, as far as was possible, re-thinking operational protocols and shifting to working from home. It also created an opportunity for us to re-envision our profession in an unpredictable world.

Because there is no cure for COVID-19 at this time, only time will tell the impact of it on our work at BAP, as well as our governance system, our population and our economy. In the meantime, the emphasis is on prevention through containment, social distancing, frequent hand washing and the wearing of masks and other protective gear in public.

While such measures are in place to minimize transmission of the virus and flatten to curve so as not to overwhelm the already overburdened health systems, the impact and the response will be different for varying groups of people. For those who can afford it,

and have access to internet, they will have the luxury of isolating themselves, working from home, stocking up on groceries and even having it delivered to them.

But for the poor, who cannot afford such luxuries as they have no savings, as many are informal daily wage earners or low-income salary earners, this is will not be realistic. They will be forced to leave home to go to work, to buy groceries and to go to do laundry. In addition, they will not have the stable connectivity to support the virtual platforms for learning, shopping and accessing public goods, to name a few. Overcrowding, poor housing, infrastructure and sanitation, will also limit their options for social distancing and frequent hand-washing. All these and more are going to be part of the debate during and Post COVID-19.



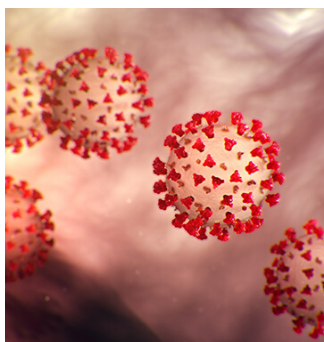
BELIZE COVID-19 CASES OVERVIEW



MISSION – To address relevant planning and development issues in Belize by working in partnership with the public and private sector and civil society organizations, and the people of Belize through research, education, advocacy and action.

FOR UPDATES ON COVID-19

Contact Ministry of Health - Belmopan



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Fax: 822 2942 or 822 2055

Email: Minister or CEO at
seniorsecretary@health.gov.bz &
Director of Health Services at
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VISION – BAP is a proactive professional planning organization committed to assuring social justice and promoting sustainability in the natural and built environment.

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