

NEWSLETTER

# BELIZE ASSOCIATION OF PLANNERS



*"Making Belize Sustainable"*

## URBANIZATION IN BELIZE: EXPLORING FOR BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND CLIMATE

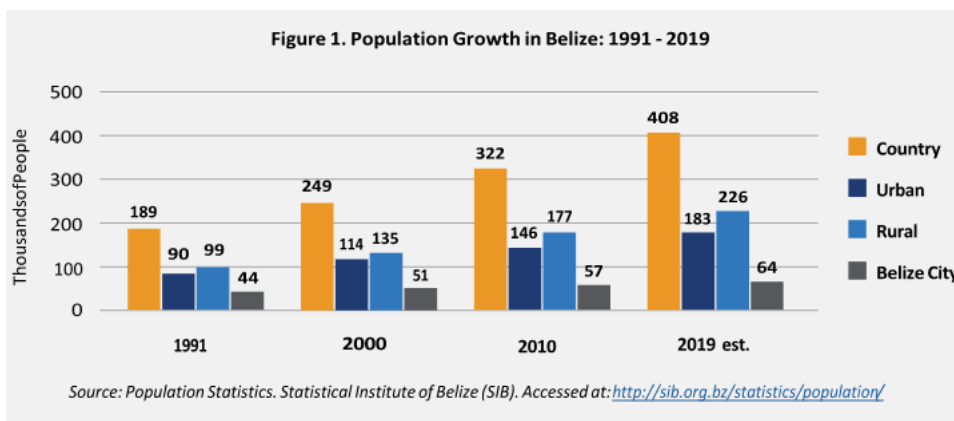
*A Research Brief Prepared for the Project to 'Improve Governance Decision-Making in Belize' - Keisha Rodriguez, BAP Vice President*

### BACKGROUND

Belize is a small country (22,963 sq. km or 8,866 sq. ml) on the Caribbean coast of Central America with an exceptional natural environment. The country is well recognized for being endowed with abundant terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity, not only in the total number of species present, but also in the vast array of ecotypes and species richness (1). This wealth of biodiversity is of national and global importance (Belize’s Barrier Reef System have been declared a World Heritage Site) and thus, the country has been a committed partner and regional leader in environmental stewardship with approximately 35.8% of its land territory falling within protected areas and 19.8% of territorial waters under marine protective management (2). Despite its progress towards a goal of sustainable development, Belize continues to tackle key threats to biodiversity which include: land use change (for example, deforestation, clearing of mangroves, filling of wetlands and agricultural expansion); unsustainable fishing; unsound logging practices; illegal wildlife trade; pollution; and transboundary incursions (3).

### POPULATION GROWTH IN BELIZE

One factor influencing land use change, is Belize’s rapidly growing population. Over the last 28 years, Belize’s population has more than doubled with annual growth rates hovering at around 3 percent (4). While the country’s urban growth rate remains among the highest in the region (Latin America and Caribbean) (5); rural population growth rates have consistently outpaced that of the urban.



A closer analysis of the national population statistics suggests that the rise in rural population can be attributed to expansion occurring in large villages that are attaining urban form and function (6); and growth in villages or satellite communities attached or closely linked to municipalities (7). Therefore, Belize is simultaneously undergoing processes of urbanization (population growth within municipal boundaries) as well as suburbanization (population growth in

# URBANIZATION IN BELIZE: Part 1 (Cont'd)

communities just outside municipal boundaries). Belize City and the 'Greater Belize City Area' is the primary example of this phenomenon.

## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF BELIZE CITY

Since its creation in 1638 as Belize Town, Belize City has continuously enjoyed urban primacy (8). Between 1950 and 1960, at what could be considered its peak in terms of growth, the city's population grew at a rate of 4.2% and its population in 1960 represented 36% of the national population (9). But just a year later in 1961, Hurricane Hattie destroyed much of Belize City and changed its growth and development trajectory. Satellite communities, such as Hattieville, were built further inland and a significant portion of the country's resources were earmarked for the development of Belmopan. Subsequently a good portion of the civil service population were incentivized to move to the nation's new capital. Presently, Belize City remains the largest urban centre in the country with a total population that is more than two and half times that of the second largest city, Belmopan. It also maintains its vital role as the country's financial and commercial hub. The city continues to grow, albeit at a rate which trends well below that of the country such that by 2010 only 18% of the national population resided within the municipal boundaries of Belize City. READ RESEARCH PAPER AT <https://d19quhjs37qamk.cloudfront.net/.../Research...>

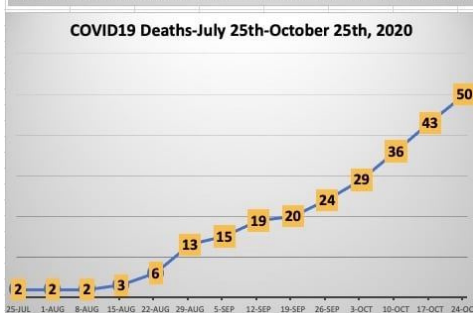
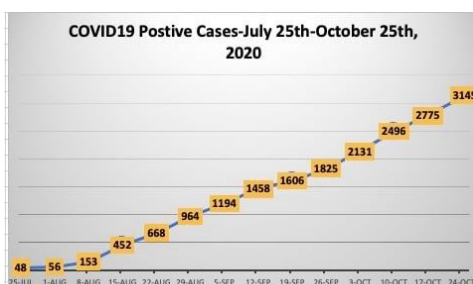
## Belize Association of Planners Signs Memorandum of Understanding to Participate in the Caribbean Platform of Land Actors (CPLA)

The Belize Association of Planners (BAP) is pleased to announce that it has joined the Caribbean Platform of Land Actors (CPLA) to collaborate with other Caribbean CBO/NGOs to share resources and expertise in order to have a collaborative effort in advocacy for land rights in Caribbean territories.

The CPLA is a partnership with the International Land Coalition (ILC), a global coalition of NGOs, which has supported since 2017, the collection of information on the status of land rights and the development of Land Actors Networks (LANS) in Belize, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, in order to improve land rights in the region. The advocacy on land rights by LANS is guided by the ILC 10 commitments to People Centered Land Governance.

- Press Release -

## COVID CASES AND DEATHS SPIKE



Over the past three months, there have been rises in both COVID-19 infections and deaths in Belize.

On July 25, there were 48 cases and 2 deaths. On October 25, there were 3,145 recorded positive cases, and 50 deaths. This represents an increase of 6,448% in infection, and 2,400% in deaths.

(Data sourced from Office of the Director of Health Services)



**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.

**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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