

100 RESILIENT CITIES INITIATIVE ENDS, BUT THE WORK CONTINUES

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In early April, the Rockefeller Foundation [announced](#) the end of the 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) program. Established in 2013 by the Rockefeller Foundation, the goal of 100RC was to increase the institutional resilience capacity of its member cities. In the absence of this high-profile organization, many cities were left with concerns regarding how to move forward given robust resources it had offered, which include financial support, planning expertise, and most importantly a forum to exchange ideas. The 100RC framework focuses on the peer-to-peer relationships between chief resilience officers (CROs) to facilitate networks and collaborations. Joshua Stanbro, CRO for Honolulu, has been key in developing a true catalyst for action and strategic planning for resiliency building. Since becoming the CRO in 2017, he has provided

direction, support, and set the tone for all actions related to the City and County of Honolulu's coordination and policy on climate change for all stakeholders, including other government entities, residents, and private entities. The loss of the 100RC network takes away the opportunity for smaller cities to convene with global colleagues and engage on a larger scale to share and develop best practices.

As the most isolated island archipelago in the world, Hawai'i is uniquely situated to assess the global state of climate change. This perspective facilitates a comprehensive approach to how our island-state can balance the long-term economic impacts of climate change with the realities that such global changes are already enacting on our society.

The [Climate Change Brief](#) and [Sea Level Rise Guidance](#), released last year by the City and County of Honolulu, emphasize the need for more in-depth economic analysis on the impact of sea-level rise on O'ahu's critical infrastructure, which includes harbor and airport facilities, sewage treatment plants, and roads. The latter report found that with a 13-inch increase in sea-level rise, the island of O'ahu would experience \$4.1 billion in structural and land loss, with 2,000 residents displaced. These figures increase substantially when sea-level rise moves to 38 inches, resulting in \$12.9 billion in structures and land loss and approximately 13,300 residents displaced. Although coastal erosion is only one metric in assessing and tracking climate resilience, the physical impacts are visible and prescient for residents who need action now.

In the context of reaching long-term solutions, Hawai'i's government should consider investing in and implementing solutions that are adaptive rather than reactionary, such as the maintenance of chronically threatened public infrastructure. Numerous climate change-related state measures were introduced but never passed during the 2019 state legislative session. [SB690](#) would have implemented recommendations such as identifying economic ramifications and recommending planning, implementation, and

adaptations to address sea-level rise. Another bill, [HB765](#), would have committed state funds to the planning and mitigation of sea-level rise and coastal hazards. During a January 23 neighborhood board meeting, Representative Chris Lee mentioned the need for taking on a long-term perspective on spending for infrastructure to reconcile the anticipated costs associated with foreseeable damage due to rising sea-levels. While many climate change related measures did not pass this session, the door has been opened for critical discussions on how the government should allocate resources for the greatest return on investment and largest impact.

At the city and county level, Honolulu is also assessing constrained resources and opportunities to leverage them to further its sustainability goals. However, time is not on anyone's side when we consider that in addition to economic impacts, Hawai'i also faces the reality that sea-level rise impacts over 500 cultural sites at risk of flooding, threatening the permanent loss of Hawaiian history, knowledge, and culture held at these sites. The intrinsic value of cultural sites is sometimes overlooked in larger and more complex conversations on climate change at the state and county levels.

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Similar to how the city of Wellington utilized Māori culture in their [Resiliency Strategy](#), Honolulu continues to engage with the community to develop an inclusive strategy for

resiliency. Honolulu is on the path towards making inclusion of Native Hawaiian values a fundamental and key component of its [Resiliency Strategy](#). There are four primary areas that the Resiliency Strategy will focus on, including “Community Cohesion: Leveraging the Strength and Leadership of Local Communities.” With this focus, there is an opportunity to learn from other 100RC cities like Wellington and provide a cornerstone in which our cultural heritage is protected and celebrated as our community builds resiliency.

Although the promises of foundations such as the Rockefeller's seem to have moved on, Honolulu took the necessary steps to institutionalize resiliency when voters approved a city charter to establish the [Office of Climate Change, Sustainability and Resiliency](#) (Resilience Office) in 2016. In April 2019, the Resilience Office released the first [Annual Sustainability Report \(ASR\)](#), establishing Honolulu's commitments in addressing climate change, sustainability and resiliency. Climate resilience is the final component of the ASR and provides key indications of Honolulu's approach to resiliency. Beach loss, hurricane preparedness, and community engagement are three metrics that are utilized. Echoing this, the Resiliency Strategy listed hurricanes and climate change impacts as top three chronic stressors and acute shocks identified by stakeholders in public polls.

Hawai'i continues to leverage public-private partnerships to develop a network of committed stakeholders and widespread buy-in on the importance of sustainability initiatives for the future. Participation in initiatives such as [Aloha+ Challenge](#), which focuses on six of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has facilitated ever-expanding recognition of Hawai'i's leadership in public and private sector partnerships. Hawai'i recently became a member of the [United Nations' Local2030 hub](#) as the first hub in the Pacific.

Hawai'i continues to take a leading role internationally in the ongoing fight for sustainable practices. As such, the City and County of Honolulu has become the state's leader

in the institutionalization of sustainability and resiliency. In recent years, the formalization and political backing to evaluate, develop, and track data-driven metrics for sustainability is the foundation that the City and County of Honolulu's Resiliency Office has leveraged for the long-term commitments required to address issues like climate change. Despite our current President's position of openly denying climate change, government support for increasing the capacity of resilience strategies remains steadfast in Hawai'i.

Disclaimer: All opinions in this article are solely those of the author and do not represent any organization.