



Love City Strong, Inc.

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Love City Strong (LCS) began as a grassroots effort of St. John residents in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, quickly mobilizing volunteers to address pressing issues associated with immediate recovery efforts. Early on, our team was recognized by federal and local partners, and in December 2017 we officially became Love City Strong, Inc., a 501(c)(3) status nonprofit organization recognized in the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Our early organizational mandate has developed into a comprehensive package of short and long term projects, each deeply tied to the wellbeing and resilience of the St. John community. Our goals are supported by a team with diverse skill sets, bonded by our shared experience of the 2017 storms and our desire to see our community thrive. Our initial projects targeted the most critical unmet needs we identified early in the recovery, and our long term projects aim to increase resilience and preparedness on island throughout multiple, complementary sectors.

LCS regularly works with agencies in both the public and private sector on various initiatives within our stated mission; we strongly believe that these collaborations are the future of disaster response and recovery. We aspire to be a part of a strong, resilient, prepared St. John and our goal is to develop programming that fulfills unmet needs within the community.

In that spirit, our goals for 2019 are focused in the areas of housing, workforce development, cistern water quality, improvements to the island's emergency response, and disaster preparedness. One of our most critical programs this year is our continued work with community partners on the Resilient Housing Initiative; supporting St. John's most vulnerable residents to get them back into safe, strong homes built in a manner that is more disaster resistant than their pre-storm conditions.

Hundreds of homes on St. John were partially or completely demolished by Hurricanes Irma and Maria - the Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates up to 74% of low and middle income residential structures on the island were damaged. Although there has been a tremendous amount of federal aid and public assistance dispersed to residents throughout the Territory, navigating these complicated systems is an arduous and difficult process for the most vulnerable of St. John's residents, and qualified contractors on the island are limited. As a result, a large number of seniors, low-income, and homebound individuals have been denied public assistance or have simply given up; unwilling or unable to appeal public assistance decisions. To complicate matters, supplies and labor in the Territory are at a premium, leaving low and middle income homeowners without any available resources. The Resilient Housing Initiative (RHI) allows LCS, together with our partners, to bridge the gap between available federal resources and the reality of construction costs in the Territory.

RHI formally began in August 2018, and by the end of the year the project had completed large scale rebuilds on three homes. In 2019, the project has grown to include three locally-based general contractors operating multiple crews in an effort to significantly increase our rate of completion. Crews are in the field every day working hard to finish homes safely and efficiently, ensuring that their design and components are able to withstand future natural disaster events.

In 2019, we anticipate that RHI will return 30 families to secure, storm-hardened homes. Eligible participants for RHI are full-time St. John residents who, upon case by case evaluation, are a member of one or more of the following categories: Seniors, low and middle income families, single parent families, pregnant women, homebound individuals, residents with a disability, and residents with non-emergency medical needs.

Due to the tremendous amount of logistical coordination involved with a project of this magnitude, LCS linked with community and international partners in the nonprofit and private sectors to combine resources, utilize different skill sets, and streamline project management and rebuilds for those most in need. Our partners in this project are Love for Love City, the St. John Angels - Long Term Recovery Team, the St. John Community Foundation, and All Hands and Hearts - Smart Response. Each partner has agreed to support different facets of the overall project, bringing their unique skill sets and talents to the table to serve as many St. John residents as possible. The scope of this project is the largest private collaboration the island has seen thus far.

LCS has taken on the responsibility of funding all construction labor, project management, fixed assets, and equipment side for the entirety of the project, including renting a materials yard and four vehicles used solely for construction purposes.

This is the lion's share of the Initiative's unmet costs, and we anticipate that our total cost share for structural builds and independent contractors will approach \$5 million by the completion of the project. Each build requires a unique approach and scope that is specific to the site; our team has encountered everything from full rebuilds, to minor roof repairs, to complete structural overhauls with variable materials and labor costs.

RHI is, for many St. John residents, the only path to full recovery. In addition to returning permanent residents to stable, disaster-resistant homes, RHI's rebuilds help to alleviate the housing crisis in other ways. Many displaced homeowners are living in secondary units that, traditionally, are rented out. Moving these families back into their homes opens up much needed rental inventory on the island, drives down skyrocketing prices, and is the quickest and most efficient way to address the rental housing shortage.

The scope of the Resilient Housing Initiative is, without a doubt, ambitious. Traditionally, housing repair in the aftermath of a disaster is one of the most onerous parts of recovery, and St. John is no exception. Sitting on a small island at the end of the supply chain, the logistical challenges are many. The support of our donors, whether through financial or in-kind donations, is critical to the continuity of our project and we ask that you please consider supporting us in our efforts.

For questions regarding RHI or Love City Strong, please contact:

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