



Philippine Delegation Visits Fort Lauderdale To Explore Adaptation Strategies



The City of Fort Lauderdale hosted another international delegation for a week-long visit to develop climate change adaptation strategies. The second delegation to visit Fort Lauderdale in 2014, this group consisted of four city officials from Legazpi City, Albay, in the Philippines. Legazpi is a coastal city that has many features in common with Fort Lauderdale, including a vulnerability to climate change, tropical climate, strong tourism sector, and engaged community.

The visit was part of the CityLinks Association of Southeast Asian Nations Cities Climate Change partnership program, an initiative focused on developing climate change adaptation strategies to strengthen urban resiliency. Fort Lauderdale was selected to participate because of its proactive efforts to understand and plan for future challenges associated with climate change and sea level rise. Working together, the two cities will develop projects targeted toward adapting and preparing for future climate conditions.

"We are honored to be one of only two cities in the United States participating in the CityLinks Southeast Asian Nations Climate Change partnership," said Fort Lauderdale Mayor John P. "Jack" Seiler. "Our alliance with Legazpi City to develop climate change adaptation strategies represents a unique opportunity for global collaboration on one of the most important issues facing our generation. We had a productive week and we look forward to working cooperatively with the delegation to explore innovative solutions to strengthen our resiliency and ensure the long-term sustainability and prosperity of our collective communities."

"Cities around the world are facing similar challenges. Because of that, they can learn a great deal from each other," said Kevin Brownawell, Director of the Energy and Infrastructure Office in USAID/Washington. "Coastal cities are especially facing sea level rise and need to adapt. CityLinks is a great program because it enables that peer-to-peer learning in practical technical areas such as stormwater management, erosion

control, and working with citizens on resilience. We had a very productive exchange between Legazpi and Fort Lauderdale."

The Legazpi delegation was led by mining engineer and City Councilor, Raul Rosal. He was joined by City Planning and Development Coordinator, Joseph Esplana; Regional Executive Director of the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, Gilbert Gonzalez; and Department Head of Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office and Executive Director of the Climate Change Academy, Cedric Daep.

The program for the Legazpi delegation's visit included: a tour of the City of Fort Lauderdale and a discussion of stormwater issues; a tour of the Palm Beach County Wastewater Treatment Plant and Wakodahatchee Wetlands; and a tour of the National Hurricane Center with a presentation on Storm Surge Modeling and Early Warning Systems. During their visit, the delegates also participated in discussions on shoreline resilience, erosion control, storm water management, local disaster challenges, how to finance climate adaptation, and how to understand community priorities related to climate change. The delegation was presented with a Proclamation honoring their visit during the Regular City Commission Meeting at City Hall at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 17, 2014. The delegation also had the opportunity to frequent many local restaurants and businesses, including the Upper Room Art Gallery at Las Olas Riverfront.

The Filipino visitors were particularly interested in the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact (Compact), which is the largest collaborative effort in the United States to respond to the impacts of climate change. The Compact was originally signed by Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe counties in 2009 to facilitate close collaboration on climate adaptation and reduction of carbon emissions. Fort Lauderdale was the first city to pledge its commitment to the Compact, and supports its efforts to protect the region's unique quality of life and economy, guide future infrastructure investments, and foster livable, sustainable and resilient communities.

The Fort Lauderdale-Legazpi partnership was announced earlier this year. Dr. Nancy Gassman, Ph.D., Assistant Public Works Director for the City of Fort Lauderdale traveled to Legazpi in April, exploring high risk areas, potential major weather event scenarios, external communication methods, water management issues, saltwater intrusion, and sea level rise. The exchange will continue after this visit, when a team of experts from Fort Lauderdale travels to Legazpi in the fall.

The exchange is supported by CityLinks, a program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). CityLinks creates city-to-city partnerships around the world to develop innovative solutions for the global challenges of climate change adaptation and mitigation, food security, and access to water and sanitation. Since 1914, ICMA has developed tools and resources that advance professional local government management to create sustainable communities and improve lives worldwide.

The partnership is also supported by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC). An international nonprofit organization, the ISC has 23 years of practical experience working with local leaders to accelerate climate change and sustainability solutions. ISC's programs are designed to facilitate peer learning and engagement among local leaders charged with the work of making their communities more sustainable. ISC has led 98 projects in 30 countries, and currently works in China, India, Bangladesh, Serbia and the United States.