

Puerto Rico Planning Board releases Land Use Plan draft

Written by [Michelle Kantrow](#) // January 15, 2015 // [Government](#) // [No comments](#)

The Puerto Rico Planning Board released Wednesday the draft of the much-awaited Land Use Plan, which seeks to establish public policy for sustainable development on the island for the next decade.

The draft of the plan will be submitted to public comment and scrutiny both [online](#) and during hearings scheduled for Feb. 2-6 in the towns of Arecibo, Ponce, Mayagüez, Humacao and San Juan, Planning Board President Luis García-Pelatti said. Although this administration took about two years to complete the document, the Land Use Plan was first proposed about 10 years ago, through Law 550 of 2004. "The draft of the Land Use Plan integrates comments submitted by government agencies, the private sector, and citizens in general," said García-Pelatti during a meeting with business reporters at the agency's Hato Rey headquarters. "These recommendations come from a broad participatory process that was carried out in different parts of the island." "This plan is a powerful tool for Puerto Rico that identifies the different values of urban, urbanized and rural areas. Additionally, this plan will be our guide to enhance the full economic and social development of our island for the next 10 years," García-Pelatti said. Through the plan, the government seeks to promote the construction and redevelopment of lands with high urban value, the use of farmlands with current and potential value, and the protection of ecological areas through conservation and in cooperation with municipal governments, he said. The proposed Land Use Plan also integrates aspects such as climate change, socioeconomic development, legal frameworks, a vision of the future and land values, among others, García-Pelatti said. During his meeting with reporters, García-Pelatti confirmed that the plan showed Puerto Rico has about 300,000 acres of land available in urban areas, of which about 32,000 acres is vacant and good for development.

"That's the equivalent of two islands of Manhattan. Just as an example, you could build 388,662 low-density housing units on the land available," he said. Meanwhile, the plan calls for conserving and preserving at least 582,000 acres of land with agricultural value islandwide. To that end, the Planning Board is working with municipal administrations to align strategies with those towns with their own plans in place, and is assisting others without to draft theirs, he said. "There are 54 towns that have their own territorial plans. We're working with another eight — Vega Baja, Arecibo, Isabela, Rincón, Yauco, Guayanilla, Lajas and Juana Díaz — so they too can have theirs in place," he said, confirming that the municipalities and central government's plans must be in harmony. Following the public hearings, the Board will keep the comments period open until Feb. 23. The goal is to be able to adopt a final framework by April, when Gov. Alejandro García-Padilla's could be signing off on it, García-Pelatti said.