



Manifesto 2020-2024:

“Reconstruction & Recovery Road Map”

Moving Forward

Building a better Future is our
Mandate

Fundamentals

The United St. Maarten Party (USP), was founded and maintains its principles of inclusion and opportunity for all. As a party, we have always embraced creativity and the promotion of young dynamic candidates, giving all an opportunity to serve our country – our record speaks for itself.

We are and will remain the trendsetters from our inception in 2014, with the unveiling of a board headed by a dynamic president, and fifteen (19) vigorous candidates, all with the desire and passion to serve our country, to serve the people; that has not and will not change.

We firmly believe that **everyone should be given an opportunity to serve our country and its people, regardless of past mistakes**. Our open-door policy and inclusive culture, where opinions and suggestions are always welcomed and debated by the leadership considering the weighed input of experienced advisors of the party, are what has driven and sustained us for the past five (5) years and we stand by our process – as without structure, there is chaos. Different opinions result in fresh ideas and new solutions, but ultimately, **we are all responsible**. And so, as we continue to welcome those seeking opportunities into our midst; providing a pedestal from which to leap, as a party **we realize it is important not to underestimate good character and commitment** to ensure that our USP family grows together and stays together.

We take on this challenge focused on improving the operation of Government and the effectiveness of Parliament, with the objective to improve the quality of life on

St. Maarten for all the people while embracing our differences.

Ideology requires balance...we bring that balance in order to serve all the people with the commitment to make the necessary **amendments in the Electoral Law** to promote stability and avoid unnecessary snap elections.

Greetings from The Team

We are a group of hard-working St. Maarteners that have come together to offer our combined expertise to help rebuild St. Maarten.

It would be unfair to state that nothing has been done in the past decades, if so, we would have nothing to lose. But it is reasonable to state that much has been left undone, and that void is what the USP team is ready to take on.

USP recognizes the hard work which has been done in research and assessment of the damage after the 2017 hurricanes. The recovery process has started through private,

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and local government initiatives, as well as funds made available by the Dutch Government through the World Bank. USP intends to continue supporting those projects and programs that are geared towards helping

St. Maarten's rebuilding and development efforts. The USP will, where necessary, review and re-prioritize in areas where the best interest of the people is not served such as the current method of the remediation of Sanitary Landfill (aka "the DUMP")

and processing of garbage. We will have the discussion, take on the debate, negotiate with our donors respectfully, to serve the best interest of St. Maarten.

We must decide whether we want to spend tens of millions of dollars in covering up the landfill without a solution for continued garbage management or save those dollars for other projects (affordable housing, education, elderly care, childcare, healthcare, etc.) by cooperating with international partners that can help us solve both the current "dump" problem and continuous waste management.

Our people's homes need to be rebuilt and repaired now and USP will ensure that this happens either through the government-appointed organization or qualified local entities like the St. Maarten Development Foundation, St. Maarten Housing Foundation, or any other capable entity on the island. We have enough local contractors willing to work and we need not import workers from abroad.

Poverty is on the rise, crime is on the rise and this is not by accident – it is a consequence of one of the most powerful natural disasters in the region. A consequence that was predictable and required immediate attention after the hurricanes of 2017, but the efforts to combat unfair competition on the job market are apparently being ignored. Efforts to ensure that our donors' money is spent in our economy, to secure employment for our people, to avoid poverty, to avoid crime are evidently not being addressed or not being addressed successfully. These issues are not invisible to USP, rather they have the most urgent attention of this team. **Help that does not reach the “grass roots” is of no help at all! We will have the tough discussions, ensure that we are prepared with facts, figures, and attainable solutions. The time is overdue for effective government.**

USP acknowledges the importance of upgrading the Tax Inspectorate and the collection of taxes however, we consider the investment in **Tax Reform** which includes **reducing the individual and corporate tax burden** and creating an investment climate to allow entrepreneurs small, medium and large to thrive are equally important. Once and for all the structural shortfalls in the Social Insurance System (SZV) must be given attention and **sole proprietors must be allowed to pay-in and obtain medical insurance. Affordable housing** must move from a popular talking point to an action plan. Regardless of education receiving the largest single portion of our island's budget over the decades - our children's **education and holistic development** has not reached desired levels. The time to do things differently is overdue.

That these are challenging times is an understatement, but it is equally true that this is an opportune moment to focus on fundamental issues to ensure that the rebuilding efforts are based on a stable foundation; a foundation that will withstand turbulent political and financial periods.

USP has **confidence in the island's independent high advisory bodies** such as the Social Economic Council, SOAB, Council of Advice, Auditing Chamber, Ombudsman, etc. These bodies guarantee the legitimacy of our constitutional structure and permit us to function autonomously. But the body-politique must be willing to let them do exactly that, knowing that this non-political,

independent branch unequivocally operates in the best interest of St. Maarten – **we are our best watchdogs to guarantee our autonomy** – we must have confidence in US.

Our team of candidates are diversified in their education, training, experience and passions. We come to the people of St. Maarten with one common denominator and that is **dedication** to do better than our predecessors. **Not to breakdown what others have built, but to continue those programs and projects that are good for this country.**

We come to the people with the understanding, skills and commitment to communicate effectively with our allies, our adversaries and those who stand in the middle, all with one objective, to correct past mistakes and bring St. Maarten back to a place where we can all thrive and live in peace.

USP CANDIDATES

- 1. Frans G. RICHARDSON**
- 2. Claudius BUNCAMPER**
- 3. Lloyd PAUL**
- 4. Chanel BROWNBILL**
- 5. Delphine A. BROOKS-MARDENBOROUGH**
- 6. Elvis FLANDERS**
- 7. Romain LAVILLE**
- 8. Richinel BRUG**
- 9. Khalil REVAN**
- 10. Akeem ARRINDELL**
- 11. Hilary WILLIAMS**
- 12. Curtis THOMAS**
- 13. Almando R. ROHAN**
- 14. Arthur L. LAMBRIEX**
- 15. Sergio BRYSON**
- 16. Wilfred WILLIAMS**
- 17. Martin WILSON**
- 18. Eligio SOMERSALL**
- 19. Denis WILLIAMS**

RECONSTRUCTION & RECOVERY ROADMAP

1. Economy Recovery

- a. Job Creation Action Plan
- b. Tax Reform
- c. Tourism Master Plan Development
- d. Entrepreneur Support and Guidance through QREDITS
- e. Sustainable Development
- f. Strengthen and Support the Marine Industry

2. Infrastructural Recovery

- a. Job Training to meet construction industry needs
- b. Review and revamp building codes
- c. Strengthen Sanitation and Waste Management
- d. Improvement of water & electricity distribution and security of the road network:
 - i. Enhancement and beautification
 - ii. Enhanced lighting and security on the island

3. Recovery and future of Our People

- a. Increase affordable housing units
- b. Increase and promote ownership of middle-income homes
- c. Strengthen and support community councils to better provide community needs
- d. Improved access to Health Care and Elderly Care
- e. New and improved hospital
- f. Education & Child Care – 5-year plan from 0 to university, which includes a new library
- g. Enhance and increase the recreational and sports facilities (i.e. drag strip and cricket field, among others)
- h. Adequate support for cultural (department) and performing arts (i.e. build new Center for the Performing Arts)

4. Heightened Disaster Management Response

- a. Review and revamp the crisis management plan
- b. Include community councils, evacuation plans and communication plans
- c. Establish shelters to secure disaster recovery aftermath

1. ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Economic Recovery is a period of economic growth, typically after a slump.

In St. Maarten, such a slump comes typically after a natural disaster – especially after a powerful, record-breaking hurricane. The immediate economic growth usually starts in the construction sector as a result of re-building of homes, public facilities and infrastructure. St. Maarten then finds itself challenged with a shortage of skilled workers because of the predominant tourism-based economy.

a. It is for this reason that one of the first issues to tackle is the **Job Creation Plan**, not just to deal with the current economic recovery, but to ensure that when we are faced with another natural disaster, we are better equipped to shift from tourism to construction. This will require investing in skills, education, and placement of our citizens and permanent residents in construction jobs, albeit temporarily.

This Job Creation Plan will only be successful as part of our overall economic recovery – if it does not require importing immigrant workers, selective expertise being the exception.

b. Economic recovery can be influenced by temporary and/or permanent **Tax Reform**. The dynamics of the economy are changed immediately after a natural disaster and it certainly did so after Hurricane Irma in 2017. We missed an opportunity to make changes in our Tax System, as the focus was on collecting taxes under the current tax regime – understandably so because of the economic decline, which translated into less tax revenue. But those efforts meant that businesses that were already having a hard time, trying to rebuild, and trying not to lay off employees, now got additional pressure to pay taxes under an already inadequate tax regime with rates of

34.5% Profit Tax, 5% Turn Over Tax, 5 % Room Tax, Wage Tax that goes up to 47.5%, 2% AVBZ, 14% AOV-AWW, 12.5+% SZV, etc.

USP will finalize the existing tax reform proposal which was presented to parliament several times and include a **Starter Incentive**, which will encourage the establishment of new businesses by providing a **tax discount**. USP will

introduce a reduction, albeit phased, of the Profit Tax and Wage Tax/Income tax rates, while the TOT (Turn Over Tax) will be changed to a VAT (Value Added Tax) and adjusted to compensate for the loss in revenue of the other reduced tax rates.

Essentially USP aims to reduce the tax burden on the residents (individual taxpayers and businesses on the island) by reducing direct tax rates, increasing indirect tax rates whereby everyone on the island paying for goods and services will contribute to the treasury. More people paying means the tax burden per person becomes less.

USP will expand on existing **economic zone** legislation and establish a geographic economic zone, offering varied economic opportunities. This expansion will attract business travelers and offer skilled employment while further enhancing the attraction to St. Maarten as a multi-purpose tourism destination.

c. The Tourism Master Plan Development: The Tourism industry continues to change and so we must adjust. We have made progress with the establishment of the Tourism Authority, but more must be done to continue to be a leader in the Caribbean. Maintaining the core quality of our tourism product, we must be prepared to make the changes necessary to meet the changing demands of the industry.

Workable plans which form part of a comprehensive economic development plan must be made, financed, and implemented.

d. In addition to providing tax incentives through our **Starters Incentives Initiative**, entrepreneurs need support and guidance through QREDITS and other

business-support programs. Existing well-functioning programs will be able to count on the support of a USP-Government.

e. Sustainable Development calls for the use of all – utilizing collective resources, limiting waste through recycling, reusing, reducing of products, and using limited resources efficiently and effectively. Sustainable development also requires thinking out of the box and exploring new markets. **Medicinal and/or Recreational Cannabis** are lucrative options if well organized, properly

legislated, and effectively controlled. While regionally and internationally this industry is being regulated,

St. Maarten should have an advantage as it seeks guidance in best business practices for this industry within the Dutch Kingdom.

Explore the challenges and cost of cruise ships remaining in port after 6:00 pm – as this would increase business for taxis, restaurants, and tour businesses – essentially bringing back life into Philipsburg at night.

Ensure that our proposed zoning laws are formalized and that we establish a proper Waste Ordinance, where solid and liquid waste collection and processing will be subject to recycling, reducing, and reusing of products. This will **lead our country to collectively learn to respect and restore our environment.**

f. Strengthen and Support the Marine Industry by ensuring that it forms part of the comprehensive economic development of the island. Maximizing the training, employing and contracting of locals who are interested in becoming service providers – with the objective of maximizing the economic benefit for St. Maarten. Ensuring that the sector pays its fair share to the treasury, while given the room to develop in an environmentally responsible manner, and thus expanding the quality and quantity of services provided on St. Maarten.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE RECOVERY

The infrastructural Recovery as the USP considers it, is a period of rebuilding the public roads, buildings and facilities to minimize further deterioration and facilitate general recovery and normalization of life after a disaster. The overall benefit to St. Maarten is maximized when the import of skills is minimized in the recovery phase.

For this reason, we aim to provide:

- a. **Job Training to meet construction industry needs** that will be institutionalized and not just be a popular phrase after a disaster.
- b. A sustainable infrastructure that is further strengthened by enforcement of adequate building codes, while **reviewing and revamping building codes**, as part of a comprehensive approach to recovery.
- c. Re-iterate plans to **Strengthen Sanitation and Waste Management**, which have been discussed, presented, changed time and again. It is time for **decisions and execution**. USP will establish the Waste Management Authority and immediately proceed to introducing adequate waste management processes. We need to ensure that locals get long-term contracts to increase job/income stability. Ensure that we stop further expansion of “the dump”; as well as support and expand private initiatives for recycling; and begin and finalize the long overdue **Plastic Bag Ban** with a ban on Single-Use Plastic as a protection of our environment.
- d. Recovery is heavily reliant on regaining power and water supply after a disaster. **Improvement of water and electricity distribution** remains a continuous endeavor. Dependable water and electricity supply are not a luxury in this day and age, and it certainly should not come at an unnecessarily high cost and/or negative environmental impact(s). The phased introduction of the use of alternative energy production was committed to between Government and NV GEBE since 2010. USP intends to make this a reality. Alternative opportunities are at our doorsteps and it is no longer necessary to be solely reliant on the production of electricity using fossil fuels or gasses, of which the cost fluctuates

(see the fuel clause on your GEBE bills) and is more harmful to the environment than other options available to us.

e. St. Maarten is a tourist destination; however, without a good product to offer, the tourists will not come, and our industry will die out. So how good our island looks (structurally, culturally, and naturally) is equally important as how strong our island is (economically). As we rebuild and improve our infrastructure, adequate attention must be paid to the **road network**; how structurally sound the roads are, as well as the access, **beautification, lighting and security** – all impacting the overall experience for our visitors. Equally important is the improvement of our maneuverability as we navigate through the roads of St. Maarten to get to work, school, play, and home.

3. RECOVERY & FUTURE OF OUR PEOPLE

a. Increase **affordable housing units** in collaboration with Housing Foundations and through Public-Private initiatives, whereby government offers **subsidized rental** units in and out of the SMHDF (St. Maarten Housing Development Foundation), essentially creating a larger pool of Affordable Housing.

b. Increase and **promote ownership of middle-income homes** by establishing a fund – funded initially by the Trust Fund – and increased & sustained by government that will enable St. Maarten professionals the opportunity to buy or build their own homes, based on manageable repayment terms. Funds will be derived from a **National Lottery**(similar to Lands Lotterij Nederlandse Antillen) that will only be used for social **development of St. Maarteners**.

c. **Strengthen and support community councils** to better provide community needs. Rebuilding projects and programs with the involvement of well-organized and established community councils will allow for the rebuilding efforts to reach those who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

d. **Improve access to Health Care and Elderly Care** by expanding those eligible for healthcare. Reviewing the Social Healthcare legislation, as a healthy population stimulates a healthy economy. Broadening the insured base increases the stability of the medical insurance system while offering healthcare coverage to more people like sole proprietors (taxis, bus drivers, vendors and others working for themselves). Adequate services and provisions for our seniors will improve their quality of life.

e. Develop and construct a **new and improved Hospital**, as it is essential to the level of health of our people and simultaneously offers economic opportunities for the development of **medical tourism**. Improved available healthcare is a crucial part of any autonomous country. We must realize that true autonomy comes with self-reliance.

f. Enhance **educational**, including **Special Education & Child Care**, institutions to meet economic market requirements and make a **5-year plan** covering 0 to

university. Providing support to educational institutions should not be limited within the compulsory education age bracket of 4-18. **Day Care and Early Stimulation** must be included in the economic and social recovery spectrum. Available care and education must be accessible to protect and solidify St. Maarten's human capital. Education and Care are fundamental elements to ensure that St. Maarten will have a population which will continuously strive to take St. Maarten to the next level. **Recovery of this country and its people include the recovery of facilities, such as the Library and Center for Performing Arts.** USP considers the (re)construction of these facilities as suitable recovery projects and will seek cooperation from our (Dutch) Kingdom partners and funding from the Trust Fund.

g. In this phase of economic recovery, the **enhancement and increase of the recreational and sports facilities** continue to lag. The ongoing ignorance by government to recognize the opportunities that proper sports facilities offer the people of St. Maarten, directly for recreational and professional purposes, continues to concern the USP. **Recovery of our recreational and sports facilities equates to recovery of our people and the economy.** Access to these facilities contributes to a stronger, more balanced St. Maarten while offering economic opportunities in **Sports Tourism**. The USP-government will ensure that such projects and programs are included in the recovery and resilience plans and seek funding at the doorstep of the Trust Fund and corporate partners to build a drag strip, an Olympic-size swimming pool, and a cricket field. **The Sport Authority** needs a proper financial injection to adequately take sports to the next level. The development of programs should not just take children "off the block" and "on the bus," but keep them off the block and positively occupied – ensuring them to be the best that they can be.

h. Much has been achieved with the appointment of a dedicated head of the Culture Department, but without resources and facilities, regardless of creative try, cultural development faces stagnation without the necessary resources. As is the case with sports, cultural development is often placed on the back burner. **Adequately supported, government's cultural programs enhance cultural**

awareness and growth as a people and of our identity, while elevating the quality of the tourism destination: “St. Maarten – the Friendly Island”.

4. HEIGHTENED DISASTER MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

a. USP recognizes the work already done with respect to the collaboration between The Government of St. Maarten and the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG-Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeentes) to **review and where necessary revamp** the National Emergency Plans.

b. This is an ongoing process, which USP will continue to support, ensuring that all stakeholders are involved; that topics such as **crisis management plans for community councils, evacuation plans and communication best practices** between government & the private sector, and government & the community are included.

USP promotes collaboration with regional partners; as such USP will reach out to organizations such as CEDEMA (Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency), to further enhance its sharing of best practices and training for our local Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

c. USP is cognizant of the fact that the World Bank procedures do not allow for quick responses to the needs of St. Maarten and its people. But these are the cards we have been dealt, and based thereon, USP will make the best out of this situation. Such is the case with the **establishment of much needed shelters** for which the process has started but the 2018-2019 government has not been able to deliver. USP will give this process its utmost attention to avoid unnecessary delays and **deliver the shelters as was agreed upon with our Kingdom partner: The Netherlands.**

CONCLUSION

USP has consciously elected to focus on recovery issues and to provide a brief description of these recovery topics in our **Reconstruction and Recovery Road Map** in this snap election manifesto 2020-2024.

St. Maarten will be in - recovery mode - for at least a decade and during this period we will adjust our approach and our plans, as we transition from recovery to regular operations of government and management of the island's affairs.

Our manifesto is based on tough choices that we will inevitably have to make as we face challenging years ahead. We will rebuild our country to be **more resilient** in the face of natural and man-made disasters. We appreciate the support our island and its people have received, and we acknowledge the importance of establishing healthy relationships with Regional, International and our Kingdom partners.

Thank you for reading our Reconstruction & Recovery Road Map. Our party and our candidates have made the choice to be active participants in the recovery of our country through this free and democratic electoral process – we now ask you to do your active part and support US at the polls on January 9th 2020, and make this recovery a joint effort.

Thank you.

- TEAM USp

See you on the Campaign Trail!

- Listen to our candidates on 88.3FM, nightly @6pm
- Stay tuned to radio stations, Local TV stations and Social Media
- Talk with our candidates on the campaign trail
- Discuss the issues at the rallies
- Listen – Ask – Compare

Requirements to VOTE:

- **Valid ID, Passport, or Driver's License**
- **Voting Card**

VOTE USP