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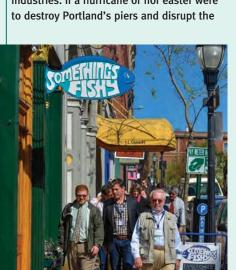**FALL MEETING PREVIEW**

OVERRELIANCE ON TOURISM A THREAT TO PORTLAND, MAINE

PORTLAND, MAINE, IS FAMOUS for its fish and lobster industries, which supply its many restaurants. These restaurants, along with a vibrant arts and culture scene, attract some 8 million tourists to the region annually. But a ULI panel of experts advised civic leaders that the city's reliance on tourism poses a serious economic risk. Cities with a diverse economic base are more resilient than those that rely on only one or two industries. If a hurricane or nor'easter were to destroy Portland's piers and disrupt the

fishing and lobster business, for instance, the city's economy would be severely affected, since the working waterfront is critical to the tourism brand of the area. The panel recommended diversifying the city's economy by investing in health care, high tech, medical technology, higher education, and arts and culture.

ULI conducted the first of a series of special resilience-themed Advisory Services panels in Portland and South Portland in May. Supported by the Kresge Foundation, the panel focused on developing strategies to make the two cities' waterfronts resilient in the face of climate change. James M. DeFrancia, the panel chairman, said their recommendations provide the cities with an "opportunity to set a [national] footprint."

The panel of ULI member-volunteers tackled the assignment in four parts. First, the panel conducted a high-level scan of the region's economy to identify opportunities and vulnerabilities. It then outlined a process to define and assess risk. Next, using selected example sites, the panel offered development and planning recommendations to make the waterfronts more adaptive to sea-level rise, storm surges, and flooding. Finally, it proposed leadership and governance strategies to harness the best and most up-to-date data and coordinate strategies across cities.

Given the importance of knowing exactly which properties and communities are at risk for climate change—and what specific risks they face—the panel recom-

mended that both cities develop a comprehensive assessment of the region's most significant risks to residents and businesses and then calculate how those risks may change over time. The assessment would also help identify which risks could be easily mitigated and which ones could affect the region's economic vitality. The panel encouraged the sponsors to consider indirect and direct damage to infrastructure as well as to commercial, industrial, and resident properties. "Risk assessment is the foundation [of] resilience planning," said panelist Byron Stigge.

To maintain a working waterfront, the panel encouraged the cities to allow their waterfronts to evolve over time, which could include strategically allowing development on the piers. This development could act as a physical buffer to storms and allow for economic vitality, panelists said and offered strategies to make the waterfronts more resilient, including the use of amphibious and floating structures, wet floodproofing, and elevation techniques. The panel walked the cities through six example sites to show how those strategies could be employed.

The panel also recommended the creation of a risk data group that would serve as a neutral and trusted adviser that sources and disseminates the best available climate data. Panelists suggested that the local council of governments or major research institutes could house such a group. The panel also recommended the creation of a resilience working group composed of leaders from the cities' businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and local governments, which could use the data compiled by the risk data group to assess risk exposure, align and coordinate infrastructure planning, and take a lead on insurance issues.

Creating resilient waterfronts will take public and private leadership, regional coordination, and extensive planning and investment. Panelists said they were encouraged to see both Portland and South Portland already working to make their communities more resilient.

Nicholas Lalla is an analyst at ULI.