Discussion paper – September 2026

CURAÇAO 2035: THE WAY FORWARD

A National Agenda for Sustainable Prosperity, Opportunity and Resilience

Executive Summary

Curaçao stands at an important moment in its development. The economy has recovered strongly in recent years, driven primarily by tourism. At the same time, longstanding challenges remain: high living costs, dependence on imported energy and food, limited economic diversification, skills shortages, infrastructure constraints, housing affordability concerns, and continuing pressure on public institutions. While tourism has become an increasingly important driver of growth, long-term prosperity cannot depend on a single sector alone.

This paper proposes a practical, non-partisan roadmap to 2035. It does not seek to replace existing policies. Instead, it builds upon current initiatives, including Curaçao's National Export Strategy, Vision Curaçao 2030, sustainability programs, and the ongoing Carrying Capacity Study.

The central objective is simple:

Create a more prosperous Curaçao with higher incomes, lower structural vulnerabilities, better opportunities for young people, and a higher quality of life for all residents.

The strategy rests on five national priorities:

1. Sustainable, high-value tourism.
2. Affordable and sustainable energy.
3. A diversified and competitive economy.
4. Knowledge, education and talent development.
5. Strong institutions and effective governance.

Success will be measured not by visitor numbers alone, but by improvements in living standards, productivity, environmental quality, affordability, and economic resilience.

Why Change Is Necessary

Curaçao possesses significant strengths:

- A strategic location in the Southern Caribbean.
- A modern port and logistics infrastructure.
- Strong international connectivity.
- A multilingual population.

- Membership of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
- A growing international tourism brand.
- Emerging opportunities in digital services, maritime industries, renewable energy and education.

However, several structural risks remain.

Economic Concentration

Tourism contributes significantly to economic activity, employment and government revenues. While this has supported recovery, dependence on a single sector leaves the economy vulnerable to external shocks.

High Cost of Living

Energy imports, food imports and infrastructure inefficiencies contribute to elevated costs for households and businesses.

Skills Mismatch

Many employers face difficulties finding specialized talent, while some young Curaçaoans continue to leave the island in search of educational and professional opportunities abroad.

Housing Pressures

Affordable housing remains a challenge for young families and middle-income households. Better management of housing supply and urban development is needed.

Institutional Constraints

Many development initiatives have suffered from fragmented implementation, insufficient coordination between institutions, and lack of consistent monitoring and accountability.

The challenge therefore is not simply economic growth. The challenge is creating better growth.

Vision Curaçao 2035[1]

By 2035, Curaçao should aspire to be:

- The Caribbean's leading high-quality tourism destination.
- A regional hub for maritime and logistics services.
- A center for knowledge-intensive exports and professional services.
- A leader in renewable energy transition among small island economies.
- A place where young people can build successful careers and families.
- A country with strong institutions, accountability and policy continuity.

[1] The title is a variation on Dr. M.P. Goede, *Annual Report for Vision Curaçao 2030 of the year 2024* (https://www.curacao2030.net/).

Economic success should translate into:
- Higher wages.
- Lower utility costs.
- Better educational outcomes.
- More affordable housing.
- Enhanced environmental protection.
- Increased social mobility.

Strategic Pillar 1

Sustainable Tourism and Liveability

Tourism will remain an important pillar of Curaçao's economy. The objective is not less tourism. The objective is higher-value tourism that delivers greater benefits while protecting the island's natural and social assets.

Priority Actions

1. Complete and Implement the Carrying Capacity Framework

The current Carrying Capacity Study provides an opportunity to establish evidence-based thresholds for tourism growth. Future decisions should consider:
- Environmental indicators.
- Infrastructure usage.
- Resident satisfaction.
- Water and energy demand.
- Waste management capacity.

2. Shift Success Metrics

Tourism performance should be measured through:
- Visitor spending.
- Length of stay.
- Visitor satisfaction.
- Resident satisfaction.
- Environmental quality.

Not solely by arrival numbers.

3. Strengthen Tourism Sustainability Funding

Evaluate the introduction of dedicated sustainability contributions from visitors, with revenues earmarked for:
- Reef protection.
- Public infrastructure.
- Waste management.

- Beach maintenance.
- Environmental monitoring.

4. Expand Community-Based Tourism

Encourage tourism spending throughout the island through:

- Cultural tourism.
- Heritage experiences.
- Culinary tourism.
- Nature-based tourism.
- Neighborhood entrepreneurship.

Expected Outcomes

- Greater economic value per visitor.
- Reduced infrastructure pressure.
- Enhanced environmental protection.
- More equitable distribution of tourism benefits.

Strategic Pillar 2

Affordable and Sustainable Energy

Energy affordability is an economic issue, a social issue and a competitiveness issue. Reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels should become a national priority.

Priority Actions

1. Accelerate Renewable Energy Deployment

Expand investment in:

- Solar energy.
- Wind energy.
- Battery storage.
- Grid modernization.

2. Encourage Distributed Generation

Enable businesses and households to participate in renewable energy production through transparent regulatory frameworks and fair compensation mechanisms.

3. Improve Energy Efficiency

Develop national efficiency programs for:

- Homes.
- Hotels.
- Government buildings.
- Schools.
- Industrial facilities.

4. Mobilize External Financing

Pursue:

- Climate funds.
- Development finance.
- Public-private partnerships.
- Kingdom cooperation arrangements.

Expected Outcomes

- Lower utility costs.
- Greater energy security.
- Reduced exposure to oil price volatility.
- Improved competitiveness for local businesses.

Strategic Pillar 3

A Diversified and Competitive Economy

Economic resilience requires multiple growth engines.
Curaçao should build on sectors already identified within national development strategies.

Growth Sectors

Maritime and Logistics Services

Leverage:

- The deep-water port.
- Dry dock facilities.
- Regional supply-chain opportunities.
- Yachting and marine services.

Digital Services

Expand:

- IT services.
- Cybersecurity.
- FinTech.
- Data services.
- Remote work ecosystems.

Creative Industries

Support exports in:

- Digital media.
- Design.
- Entertainment.
- Cultural production.

Professional Services

Strengthen:

- Legal services.
- Financial services.
- Consulting.
- Business-process services.

Blue Economy

Develop sustainable opportunities related to:

- Marine science.
- Aquaculture.
- Ocean technologies.
- Marine innovation.

Improving the Business Environment

Simplify:

- Permitting processes.
- Business registration.
- Investment approvals.

Digitization of government services should become a national competitiveness priority.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased exports.
- Better-paying jobs.
- Greater investment.
- Reduced dependence on tourism.

Strategic Pillar 4

Knowledge, Education and Talent

The most valuable resource of Curaçao is its people.
Future prosperity depends on education, innovation and talent retention.

Priority Actions

1. Align Education with Economic Needs

Strengthen collaboration among:

- Government.
- Employers.
- Educational institutions.
- The University of Curaçao.

Focus areas include:

- Technology.
- Maritime services.
- Engineering.
- Healthcare.
- Sustainability.

2. Attract International Students

Develop Curaçao as a regional educational destination by expanding international academic partnerships and specialized programs.

3. Retain and Attract Talent

Create incentives for:

- Returning diaspora professionals.
- Skilled international professionals.
- Young entrepreneurs.

4. Promote Research and Innovation

Support collaboration between businesses and educational institutions to accelerate innovation and commercialization.

Expected Outcomes

- Higher productivity.
- Reduced skills shortages.
- Stronger innovation ecosystem.
- Enhanced global competitiveness.

Strategic Pillar 5

Housing, Food Security and Quality of Life

Economic growth must improve daily life.

Housing

Develop a national housing strategy focused on:

- Affordable housing supply.
- Revitalization of vacant properties.
- First-home ownership opportunities.
- Mixed-use development.
- Sustainable urban planning.

Food Security

Increase resilience through:

- Modern agriculture.
- Greenhouse technology.

- Aquaponics.
- Local food production initiatives.
- Food innovation partnerships.

Social Mobility

Ensure that growth supports:

- Youth opportunity.
- Workforce participation.
- Skills development.
- Community development.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved affordability.
- Enhanced resilience.
- Better quality of life.
- Stronger communities.

Governance and Accountability

Good ideas alone do not create results. Execution matters.

National Development Council

Establish a permanent multi-stakeholder body including:

- Government.
- Parliament.
- Private sector.
- University of Curaçao.
- Civil society.
- Youth representatives.

Annual National Scorecard

Publish measurable indicators every year.

Suggested Metrics

Indicator	2035 Objective
Visitor spending	Increase significantly
Renewable energy share	Majority renewable generation
Median household income	Sustained real growth
Housing affordability	Improved accessibility
Youth unemployment	Significant reduction
Service exports	Strong growth

Indicator	2035 Objective
Food production	Increased local share
Permit processing time	Major reduction

Independent Monitoring

Annual public reporting should ensure continuity across political cycles and increase accountability.

Financing the Transition

Fiscal responsibility must remain central.

Initiative	Funding Sources
Tourism sustainability projects	Visitor contributions, public funding
Renewable energy	PPPs, climate funds, development finance
Education initiatives	Government, Kingdom and international partners
Housing programs	Public-private partnerships
Digital government	Government modernization funds
Food security initiatives	Development programs and private investment

The First 100 Days

Momentum matters. The following actions can begin immediately:

1. Publish National Development Priorities

Confirm national consensus around the five strategic pillars.

2. Establish a National Development Council

Create the governance structure needed for implementation.

3. Launch a Tourism Sustainability Dashboard

Track carrying-capacity indicators and publicly report outcomes.

4. Create a Renewable Energy Task Force

Prepare an accelerated renewable energy roadmap.

5. Initiate Regulatory Simplification

Identify and remove major administrative barriers to investment and entrepreneurship.

Five-Year Roadmap

Year 1

- Governance structures established.
- Priority legislation prepared.
- National scorecard launched.

Years 2-3

- Renewable projects accelerated.
- Permit reforms implemented.
- Tourism sustainability framework operational.

Years 3-4

- Knowledge economy initiatives expanded.
- Educational partnerships strengthened.
- Housing and food-security programs scaled.

Years 4-5

- Comprehensive review of progress.
- Adjustment of targets and policies.
- Publication of Curaçao 2040 outlook.

Conclusion

Curaçao does not need to imitate another country. It needs to build on its own strengths. The island already possesses the assets needed for long-term success: strategic location, entrepreneurial talent, international connectivity, natural beauty, and strong institutions within the Kingdom.

The challenge is to align these strengths around a shared national agenda.
By focusing on sustainable tourism, affordable energy, economic diversification, talent development, quality of life, and strong governance, Curaçao can create a future that is not only more prosperous, but also more resilient, inclusive and sustainable.

The goal is not simply growth. The goal is a better Curaçao for the next generation.