

# Belizean Star of the Month!

## Dr. Kareem Usher

#Rememberit'sgoodtobeBelizean

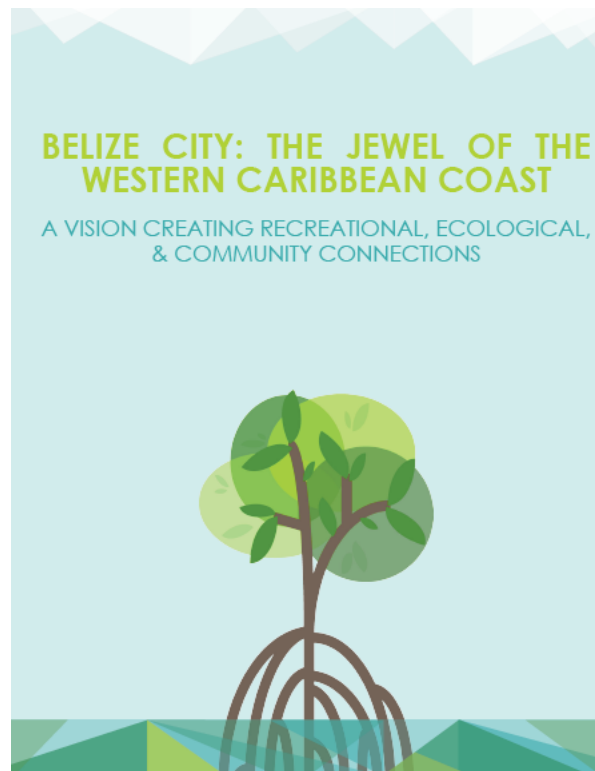


*Photo Credit: Dr. Kareem Usher*

Dr. Usher was born in Belize City and attended Grace Primary School on Amara Avenue. He then went on to St. John's College for high school and St. John's College Sixth Form where he graduated in 1994. Upon receiving an opportunity to continue his studies in the United States, he attended Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. Dr. Usher returned home for two years and worked for the Belize Tourism Industry Association and later the Belize Family Court where he served as Coordinator, before returning to the United States to pursue his Master's degree in Urban Planning from the University of Louisville. He later earned his doctoral degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida.

After graduating from Florida State, he worked as a Post-doctoral Research for one year with the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University. The following year, he joined the faculty at the Austin E. Knowlton School of Architecture (at Ohio State University) as an Assistant Professor of City and Regional Planning. He conducts research on urban food systems, particularly where it intersects with food access, social justice, regional governance and community, and economic development. His work involves compassion as a planning approach and utilizes community-based participatory research methodologies to explore perceived as well as objective measures of access to healthy food by food-insecure families in low-access ('food gap') communities.

*"Growing up in Belize, I learned self-discipline, respect for myself and others and humility, which are virtues that I continue to exercise in all aspects of my life."*



[Read Full Project in PDF](#)

### **1. How long have you been in the US?**

I have lived in the United States for 20 years.

### **2. What part of Belize are you from? Did that influence the way you live your life today?**

I was born and nurtured in Belize City. Growing up in Belize has certainly influenced the way I live my life. The Belizean culture has taught me to consider how my actions affect others and to persevere through difficulties. I learned how to make "do with less". In completing a task, I pay attention to details and always do the best I can, given available resources. Growing up in Belize, I learned self-discipline, respect for myself and others and humility, which are virtues that I continue to exercise in all aspects of my life.

### **3. Discuss the way/ways you are giving back to Belize.**

As a professor of city and regional planning at The Ohio State University, my contributions to Belize over the past years have been through research. I have partnered with the Belize Association of Planners (BAP) to develop a report (along with my students) on connecting parks and water-ways in Belize City for resiliency. Along with BAP, SJCJC, YMCA and the Belize Health Department, I directed a study abroad course where my students worked on small local projects such as working with rural (Maskall Village, Nagobac, St. Anne's, Corozalito and Santana) and urban (Belize City) community health workers to deliver care,

re-design the SJCJC campus to mitigate flooding and develop a recreational area for students, and to conduct a neighbourhood planning project in the area bounded by Haulover Creek to Water Lane, and from East Collet Canal (Fish Market) to East Canal (Bus Station). Incidentally, I spent my formative years in this area; I lived on Mosul Street. I have also conducted research in Q'eqchi'-Mopan Maya villages in the Toledo District - Jalacte, Santa Cruz and Aguacate.

I hope to continue and to be able to do more for Belize. My plan is to create a research centre ('think tank') in Belize that would conduct town and village planning for every settlement in the country as well as research in order to inform social and developmental policies - that is, planning for sustainability; how many houses to build and where should they be built; transportation planning; hazard mitigation planning; and others.

## Other Projects Include:

### Neighbourhood Reimagining of Belize City: Between the Canals



Students worked on a visioning plan for an older, once vibrant area in Belize City. They described ideas to maintain the remaining historic homes and buildings in the area, beautify and improve the neighbourhood Primary School – Calvary Temple School, and re-connect the Haulover Creek which divides the city between north and south.

[Discover More](#)

### Mangrove Lounge: Rest and Recreation Park – St. John's College Junior College



#### Mangrove Lounge: Rest and Recreation Park

The Ohio State University  
CRPLAN 5798

Andrew Bernard  
Amanda Ferguson  
Amber Long  
Maureen Welsh

This project was developed through a partnership between The Ohio State University and St. John's College Junior College in order to address city and regional planning needs in Belize. Such needs were met through community service learning and the application of classroom techniques and knowledge towards the solution of real-world problems.

[Explore More](#)