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Hampton by Hilton Breaks Ground in St. Thomas: First New USVI Hotel in 30 Years

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Local leaders and developer Shaun Miller, fourth from left, broke ground on Fri. Oct. 20, 2023 for the Hampton by Hilton Hotel in St. Thomas USVI. By. HAVEN DEVELOPMENT

HAVENSIGHT, ST. THOMAS — The Hampton by Hilton, the first new hotel being built in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 30 years, broke ground Friday afternoon at Havensight in St. Thomas and will open Q1 2025.

The important occasion, which proponents believe can spark a renaissance of new hotel development in the territory, was celebrated by local leaders in attendance, among them Governor Albert Bryan, V.I. Port Authority Executive Director Carlton Dowe — who introduced the project to GERS — GERS CEO Angel Dawson, EDA CEO Wayne Biggs, and Senate leaders, including

President Novelle Francis, Finance Chair Donna Frett-Gregory, and Sen. Marvin Blyden.

The new hotel will boast 126 rooms, and will serve mainly the business community, including overnights such as pilots looking for a reasonably priced hotel. The Hampton by Hilton St. Thomas is also expected to be a boon to businesses in Havensight, including food operations, as the hotel will only serve breakfast and rely on partnerships with restaurants for other meals that can be delivered. Guests will be able to utilize in-room tablets to order cuisine or merchandise for delivery or pick-up. They can also pre-order to dine at local restaurants.

The project is being helmed by Haven Developments, which partnered with Hilton. Vice President of Development for the Caribbean and Latin America for Hilton Hotels and Resorts, Pablo Maturana, celebrated the groundbreaking, highlighting that the St. Thomas hotel is among over a hundred currently under development. "Today we celebrate the return of the Hilton brand to the territory," said Maturana. "We currently have 210 hotels open in the region in 28 countries and territories, along with 110 properties in the pipeline. We thank the entire community of St. Thomas for welcoming us."

Haven Development Founder Shaun Miller, stated, "This is a major milestone for St Thomas. We are excited to welcome guests to the Hampton by Hilton in the first quarter of 2025. The adjacent green space will bring the community together and make Havensight Mall the place to be."

The five-floor hotel will restore the Hilton brand on the island, along with its name recognition and loyalty. The hotel is designed to be 70,586 square feet constructed on a 1.62-acre parcel. It will feature a pool, bar, kitchen, and meeting space. The adjacent 2.662-acre parcel will be used for a welcome center, green space, and parking, according to a release from Haven Development.

Governor Bryan said the new hotel, the first in 30 years, is yet another example of the growth being experienced during his tenure. He pointed to several other hotel projects, all of which are redevelopment efforts, that are either already open or coming online soon. "We have a commitment to make our territory the best," he said.

Mr. Dowe, the VIPA executive director, assisted Mr. Miller in navigating the challenges of getting such a project up and running in the U.S. Virgin Islands — from lobbying senators for a zoning bill that facilitated the development at Havensight, to navigating the permitting process. He said the rest of the world is not waiting on the U.S. Virgin Islands. "We have got to move, and whatever it's going to take, we've got to work together and make sure these things happen," he said.

Sen. Francis also lauded the development, saying that the new hotel would result in new jobs and economic development.

With the property on which the new hotel is being constructed being owned by GERS, the pension system's CEO, Mr. Dawson, said GERS would continue to seek partnerships that bolster its financial standing.

Mr. Biggs, the EDA CEO, praised Mr. Miller and his several businesses within the EDA, including the award-winning Standard Aviation, as model members in perennial good standing.

Sen. Frett-Gregory, like every other speaker, praised Mr. Miller for not only his investments in the USVI, but his genuine spirit and care for the territory. "If there's one person that I know that has come to these U.S. Virgin Islands and setup shop, and believes in the people of this territory, is Mr. Miller," she said as the gathering applauded. "So, I want to thank you. I want to thank you for believing in us, and thank you for investing in the future of the Virgin Islands."

