

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Trailer-Like Structure Sparks Preservation Concerns in Christiansted Historic District

Centerline Car Rentals' plan to upgrade an existing trailer-like structure instead of building anew drew scrutiny from the Historic Preservation Committee, which stressed that any modifications must align with Christiansted's historic design standards.

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Centerline Rental's downtown Christiansted site, near the Gov't Parking Lot, is under review by the St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

During Thursday's meeting of the St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee, members reviewed a proposal concerning modifications to the Christiansted property currently

occupied by Centerline Car Rentals. The discussion focused on ensuring that any changes to the site would comply with the architectural and visual standards of the historic district.

John Woods, the architect representing Centerline Car Rentals, appeared before the committee to discuss a shift in plans. While new construction had previously been approved for the property, Mr. Woods explained that economic conditions have changed. "Changes in the economy since then," he said, "means that new construction is not feasible at this time."

Instead, Mr. Woods presented an alternative: updating the existing structure already on the site. "We can take the present structure that's on the site and modify it by cladding it with new exterior finishes," he proposed. Additionally, he requested feedback on installing a chain link fence around the property, noting, "That needs to be specifically part of the amended permit in order to happen."

Committee members expressed concern about the visual compatibility of the current structure, which they compared to a construction trailer, with the surrounding architecture in historic Christiansted. "Even if you clad that structure...with the size of it and the size of the lot it still would look like it's a trailer on site," commented committee member Rupert Pelle.

To address those concerns, Sean Krigger, director of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), recommended relocating the structure to align with the eastern boundary of the property. Mr. Woods responded that the trailer could indeed be moved and reassured the committee that, following the exterior improvements, "it's not going to look like a trailer."

Attention then turned to the proposed fencing. Committee members told Mr. Woods that while chain link fencing might be permissible in side and rear yard areas, it would not be allowed along the property's street-facing boundary. "In some cases, side and back yards have been allowed to have this chain link fence, but your street façade definitely has to be corrected because a chain link fence along the street line is not allowed," Mr. Krigger clarified.

To comply, Mr. Woods and his client would need to install cladding over the chain link, possibly a picket-style facade, as suggested by the SHPO director. Any barbed wire topping would also have to be completely concealed by the new covering.

With the committee's expectations clearly outlined, Mr. Woods concluded by assuring members that he would return with finalized design plans and submit a formal application for approval.