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## Tariffs Drive Interest in USVI's South Shore Trade Zone, But Infrastructure Lags Behind

**Economic Development Authority Director Wayne Biggs says interest in the South Shore Trade Zone has surged due to U.S. tariffs, but a lack of ready industrial space—especially post-hurricane—may stall manufacturers eager to set up shop in the USVI.**

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Nelcia Charlemagne **June 10, 2025**

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**Aerial view of Estate Betty's Hope, a key 367-acre site within the South Shore Trade Zone, offering oceanfront access, major utilities, and flat land primed for industrial development. By. EDA**

Sweeping tariffs introduced by the Trump administration could potentially spell good news for investment in the Virgin Islands. According to Wayne Biggs, the Economic Development

Authority's executive director, "there has been increased inquiries and interest in the South Shore Trade Zone."

Mr. Biggs shared with the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture on Monday that manufacturers of medical equipment, plastic, and batteries for renewable energy have all signaled a desire to set up shop in the USVI. Emphasizing the demand, Mr. Biggs explained that the authority "fields calls daily from businesses seeking commercial space and/or a South Shore Trade Zone location to conduct its business operations."

"The South Shore Trade Zone, in particular, has gotten sort of a new look as a result of tariffs and the fact that we're outside the customs zone," Mr. Biggs explained to Senator Angel Bolques Jr. The lawmaker had enquired about "emerging industries" that the USVI could take advantage of. For Mr. Biggs, the concentration should be on "manufacturing and assembly," but "we would need to have more facilities that can house these operations." Transshipment, too, is another option. "We definitely need to develop some cold storage at the ports and some other warehousing," said the EDA executive director.

The problem, now, is a lack of space.

"We need more facilities in the South Shore Trade Zone. We've created an area, but we haven't created the infrastructure within that area," Mr. Biggs stated. "Entities would love to move into buildings that are already there," he added. Existing warehouse space, like that in the William D. Roebuck Industrial Park, is "full to capacity." "If we had two additional buildings, we could fill those buildings right away," Mr. Biggs insisted.

Nearby warehouse space in buildings owned by the Virgin Islands Port Authority remains in a state of disrepair since taking damage from the 2017 hurricanes. "We're at capacity at the end of the industrial park, and there's really no facilities within Renaissance other than the raw land," lamented Mr. Biggs.

Nevertheless, the Economic Development Authority continues to do what it can to expand industrialization across the territory, Mr. Biggs said. Outside of the South Shore Trade Zone, its Enterprise Zone Commission (EZC) manages four designated enterprise zones. Mr. Biggs testified that the EDA intends to [expand existing enterprise zones](#), as well as create new commercial zones on St. John and St. Thomas.

The EZC also continues to "diligently work towards establishing the agro processing facilities on both islands," Mr. Biggs shared. To house the Agro and Food Innovation Center on St. Croix, the EDA has entered into a contract to purchase a King Street property within the Frederiksted Enterprise Zone. "ECC has secured \$2 million in funding from the Virgin Islands Legislature for this facility," said Mr. Biggs. Similarly, the EDA is entering a long-term lease with the Department of Property and Procurement to establish an identical center in the Savanne-Downstreet Enterprise Zone.