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More Than 14 Acres in Estate Adrian Proposed for Housing, Businesses and Public Park; DPNR Raises Watershed Concerns

Developers seek rezoning of more than 14 acres in Estate Adrian for housing, businesses and a public park. DPNR raised watershed, flooding, erosion and protected-plant concerns, while public comments on the proposal remain open through Aug. 30 this year.

Development / **Published On August 20, 2026 07:16 AM /**

Janeke Simon **August 20, 2026**

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An aerial view of the Estate Adrian and Fish Bay area on St. John, where a proposed 14-acre mixed-use community has prompted DPNR questions over watershed, flooding and stormwater impacts.

ST. JOHN — A family trust is seeking to rezone more than 14 acres in Estate Adrian for a mixed-use community that would include single-family homes, apartments, a grocery store, pharmacy, medical offices and a public park, while environmental officials are calling for greater analysis of the project's potential effects on the Upper Fish Bay watershed.

The St. John Coastal Zone Management Committee heard the proposal this week from the Geharht Sprauve Senior Family Trust. The application would change the property from R-1, or low-density residential zoning, to a combination of R-4 medium-density residential, B-3 scattered business and B-4 business-residential zoning.

"This rezoning request is not an application for speculative development," stated Gershwain Sprauve, vice president of Adrian Emprise LLC. "It is an appeal for the zoning framework needed to plan responsibly for community need that already exists," he told commissioners.

Housing and Services Planned Outside Cruz Bay

The proposed community, named Adrian's Geste, is intended to address housing and service shortages on St. John outside Cruz Bay. Residential components would include both single-family homes and multifamily apartments, with units ranging from studios to three-bedroom residences.

The commercial portion is envisioned as neighborhood-oriented development, including a grocery store, pharmacy and medical offices. A dedicated public park centered around historic ruins would serve as a focal point of the development.

Guilderoy Sprauve, president of Adrian Enterprise LLC, said construction would occur in phases.

"Our first phase will be our residential units. The second phase will [be] the commercial center, followed by our Greenspace and walking path," he said.

Project designer Emman Abelardo also clarified the scale of the proposed buildings after CZM staff questioned earlier conceptual plans that depicted structures as high as six stories.

Those concepts are no longer being pursued. Abelardo said the current plans call for residential buildings no taller than three stories.

DPNR Raises Fish Bay Watershed Concerns

DPNR officials focused much of their questioning on the potential environmental effects of allowing substantially greater development density on the property.

Mary Vargo of DPNR's Coastal Zone Management Division noted that portions of the project site fall within the Upper Fish Bay watershed.

"A rezoning of this magnitude should not occur without a watershed scale impact analysis that can demonstrate that this proposed increase in development is compatible with the long-term protection of the Fish Bay watershed and downstream coastal resources," she advised.

Fish & Wildlife Division representative Rukiya Andrews also said several protected plant species could potentially be present on the property and asked the development team to notify authorities if any specimens are discovered.

She additionally pointed to two guts running along opposite sides of the property and requested more information addressing flooding, erosion and stormwater management.

Public Comments Accepted Through Aug. 30

The presentation to CZM begins the next stage of the rezoning review rather than granting approval for the development.

A public comment period is now open through Aug. 30.

Once that period closes, DPNR will have 30 days to prepare its recommendations for submission to the commissioner and, subsequently, to the V.I. Legislature.

The review will therefore continue with the proposed housing and commercial benefits being weighed alongside questions about watershed protection, drainage, flooding, erosion and the environmental implications of increasing development density across the Estate Adrian property.