

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas' Main Street And Downtown Revitalization Projects Receive Praise From Mapp

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Ernice Gilbert **March 06, 2015**



Two St. Thomas projects, one on Main Street costing \$10 million and the other in downtown Charlotte Amalie with a price tag of \$140 million, received praise from Governor Kenneth Mapp during his keynote address at the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting held Thursday at the Palms at Pelican Cove. The governor pledged his support to move the projects forward.

Both projects, according to the governor, have been driven by non-profit entities, property owners and businesses. However, while the Main Street project is fully funded, there is some litigation the governor said he will have to personally get involved in in order to help move the development forward.

The governor's aids gave a slideshow presentation of Main Street's current design and what it would look like if the revitalization plan was put in place.

"Many of you may see elements you see in Frederiksted on Main Street and this project is completely funded, and we want to get it done by the next particular season," Mapp said. "And part of what we're committed to doing in the revitalization of our towns in St. Croix and in St. Thomas, is to drive a process of getting people to live in the towns. The towns cannot be revitalized if we do not have folks living in the towns."

When it comes to the revitalization of downtown Charlotte Amalie -- an effort spearheaded by the St. Thomas group, Downtown Revitalization, Inc. (DRI) -- Mapp highlighted the congested roads as a problem that needs to be re-imagined, and lauded those involved in putting that project, which is not fully funded, together.

"The secondary issue, as you know, is transportation in St. Thomas -- moving people. And we have a complete backlog of traffic congestion as more visitors come to the island and as issues pick up in the island," Mapp explained. "And this has been a project that the community in St. Thomas worked on, done by a charrette, and this project is estimated at \$140 million, [and] we're announcing that the administration supports the project. It's a community-driven project, and we're going to work to get the funding for this project."

Mapp said the "federal government will pay up to 90 percent of the cost of this project, and we want you to see what this project is because we're announcing today that we're in support of this project, which will be done in two phases."

The governor's aid again gave a slideshow presentation of the current appearance of downtown Charlotte Amalie, then a glimpse of what it will be once the \$140 million revitalization project is complete.

"Currently, the waterfront will be expanded [to include] four-lane traffic, there will be a walking esplanade on the seaside, and the highway would go around the Legislature, as opposed [to] between the Fort and through the Legislature," Mapp explained.

He continued: "This component piece on this project requires not only ground transportation, but water transportation, and the Lieutenant Governor and I have been speaking about this project with the taxi industry, and letting them know here's an opportunity to get involved in driving water transportation in St. Thomas."

Mapp also said the West Indian Company (WICO), a semi-autonomous government entity, had planned on developing a \$70 million project on the Charlotte Amalie harbor; however, the governor said his administration does not support the project in its Long Bay location because he is against putting 10 acres of concrete in the Charlotte Amalie harbor, as it would only lead to more congestion.

"The last thing we need to do is destroy the product that exists there in our attempt to improve the quality of our project, so we will not be doing that," the governor said.

The Downtown Revitalization, Inc. is comprised of residents, land owners and business owners in the Charlotte Amalie area, who, according to the organization's [website](#), became frustrated with "inadequate public services, including public safety, lack of

parking, traffic congestion, and the physical deterioration of our historic town.”

The group [recently met with the governor](#) to discuss their plans for the town. It sees Charlotte Amalie as a town offering a "24/7 life, not one that closes up at 5 p.m.," and describes the scope of the town as "stretching from Havensite and Sugar Estate in the east to Frenchtown in the west and north from the Waterfront uphill, to include the neighborhoods of Savan, Fireburn Hill, Synagogue Hill, Long Path, Garden Street and Government Hill.”