

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Housing Community For Seniors Opens In St. Thomas

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ST. THOMAS -- Governor Kenneth Mapp on Friday cut the ribbon at the grand opening ceremony for the territory's newest housing community, Sugar Estate Seniors Affordable Housing. The development, located just north of the Schneider Regional Medical Center here, includes eighty apartments, a community room, a laundry room, and a sizable enclosed parking area. It also features a view of the harbour and West Indian Company cruise ship dock.

Robert Graham, executive director of the Virgin Islands Housing Authority (V.I.H.A.), hailed the new development as one which will "set the standard for development throughout the territory," according to a press release Government House issued on Friday. Mr. Graham praised the construction, the view, and the accommodations as

fundamental changes in senior housing design. He said that V.I.H.A. is providing homes, not simply housing, where “seniors can now live in joy and dignity.”

Noreen Michael, president of the V.I.H.A. board, added: “With quality, affordable, and safe housing, we’re contributing to seniors’ quality of life.” Based on the Sugar Estate Seniors Affordable Housing model, she said, “We’ll be able to develop affordable housing for vulnerable groups throughout the territory.”

According to the release, Governor Mapp commended the collaborative effort of the local and federal governments, and the private sector, to produce the new housing community. He noted that he has created a housing strategy group which, among other things, will seek ways to close the wide gap between housing demand and housing stock. The territory's leader told the audience gathered at the grand opening that his vision for the future of housing development in the territory will involve more than construction. Future building must be planned in ways that transform attitudes and add activities to make communities better places in which to live, Mr. Mapp said.

Currently, 32 units in the new Sugar Estate development are occupied by eligible seniors. It is the first seniors housing development on St. Thomas in 18 years; the last being Contant Knolls, which opened in 1996. The newest property is managed by the Interstate Realty Management Company, according to the release.