

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp's Plan To Overhaul Lagoon And Cramer Park Unveiled At Charrette

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp has big plans for the Altona Lagoon in Gallows Bay and Cramer Park on the east end of this island. For some time now, he has been talking about overhauling the two locations, widely used by the community for camping, parties, beaching and other events.

Mr. Mapp recently hosted a charrette that saw community members and other stakeholders coming together, visiting both locations and determining the best route forward in terms of design. On Friday at the Canegata Ballpark Center, Harvey Sasso, president of [Coastal Systems](#) -- the firm working on the new designs -- spoke extensively about a near final iteration of the projects.

Coastal Systems suggested in its design removing the north road of the Lagoon to expand the beach's edge. Mr. Sasso said the beach's edge is currently too narrow, and takes away from Lagoon's potential. He said the idea is to "connect with the water." Mr. Sasso noted that the beach at the Lagoon was man-made, in that it was not a natural, geographical placement, and argued that extending its shoreline would also serve as a stabilizer.

The new road would include a compromise for those who appreciate the roundabout. According to Mr. Sasso, the new road would take the south path, go past the concession, and cut back south.

The design pays homage to the beautification efforts of Susana Ocasio-Santana, who planted hundreds of trees, shrubs and flowers and drastically enhanced the Lagoon's beauty. Other design ideas include a cultural and ecological center, which Mr. Sasso said would be useful in teaching the upcoming generation about culture and history.

A walking trail in the center of the Lagoon mimicking the Washington Monument, and a kids dock closer to the Lagoon's entrance were also suggested. And Mr. Sasso encouraged the government to purchase Little Bay, which is owned by the Armstrongs, a wealthy St. Croix family that owns the Buccaneer Hotel, as well as the Gallows Bay Shopping Center, among other properties and businesses.

For Cramer Park, Mr. Sasso said the entire design is based around the road system, including an earlier, west entrance, which would then circle back out from the current entrance. He said the investment in changing the road system would be considerable but worth it.

The existing concession would be overhauled into a more modern facility, and the area to the east of it would be cleared, to again "connect with the beaches," Mr. Sasso said. Patrons would be able to leave the beach and head straight to the concession with no impediments.

Other design ideas include overhauling the central building with more restrooms and other important functions; a 500-car parking lot on the other side of the park located immediately west (the lawn in the park could be utilized if parking becomes an issue for a specific event); an amphitheater south of the concession; buildings for lifeguards and more.

"I can assure you that it will be implemented and constructed, and if you all know me, it's not going to take ten years to get done," the governor said yesterday, adding that the projects were part of the first phase of his [capital budget](#). He told The Consortium that the estimated cost was between \$9 million to \$10 million, but with the suggestions given by Mr. Sasso, the final cost could wound up being around \$15 million.

Feature Image: Harvey Sasso discussing design plans for the Altona Lagoon and Cramer Park. (Ernice Gilbert, VIC)