

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Housing And Urban Development Announces \$243 Million In Grant To U.S. Virgin Islands

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ST. THOMAS -- At a press conference called by Government House and held at the West Indian Company this afternoon, Pamela Hughes Patenaude, deputy secretary for the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.), announced the allocation of \$243 million to the U.S. Virgin Islands, monies that will be used in the effort to house Virgin Islanders displaced by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the two Category 5 storms that slammed the islands in September.

Ms. Patenaude praised the Mapp administration's commitment to rebuild the territory, calling it "unparalleled," following a tour of St. Thomas.

The substantial grant is being provided through H.U.D.'s Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program. Since the CDBG-DR assistance may fund a broad range of recovery activities, H.U.D. can help communities and neighborhoods that otherwise might not recover due to limited resources. "We do hope that this will help to address the serious unmet housing needs, the economic development needs here, and this is just the beginning of I think a wonderful partnership... And I believe under your leadership that we are going to see an amazing renaissance here," Ms. Patenaude said of Mr. Mapp.

The deputy secretary, representing President Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and H.U.D. Secretary Ben Carson, said the administration would continue to rely on the Federal Emergency Management Agency for information, as well as information from H.U.D.'s regional office in Puerto Rico, relative to damages the territory sustained. She said H.U.D. was not here to dictate how the territory rebuilds, but rather facilitate its successful resurgence with support in a variety of ways, chief among them funding.

"We were very, very impressed with the plans that were underway prior to Irma and Maria hitting the islands," she said. "We are here to support the U.S. Virgin Islands; we are not here to tell you how to rebuild your community."

The governor said the \$243 million will hasten the placement of residents in homes. "I'm told that you're going to see within months the beginning of the demolition of Tutu High Rise. You will see the plans that we have for the restoration of housing stock beginning to take place. You will see the two housing communities that we're developing -- one on St. Thomas, one on St. Croix," Mr. Mapp said. "There are about a 1,000 individuals that are shovel-ready that have been qualified for mortgages under the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority. These funds are going to hasten homes and communities for these individuals."

Feature Image: HUD Deputy Secretary Paula Patenaude, Governor Mapp and VIHA Executive Director Robert Graham visit Tutu Highrise Housing Community on Friday. (Credit: Government House)