

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sports And Events Center At UVI St. Croix To Be Built With Federal Dollars, Mapp Says

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ST. CROIX -- During an interview with The Consortium on Wednesday, Governor Kenneth Mapp said that monies from the \$1.6 billion being provided by the federal government through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D.), will be used to build a world-class sports and events center at the University of the Virgin Islands' St. Croix campus. The governor said because the facility will be built to double as a shelter in times of natural disasters, it qualifies as a project on which the federal funds can be expended.

"As you know we were doing the multi-cultural sports facility at UVI in St. Croix. We're going to close the Educational Complex as a shelter, and use the new sports complex as

a hardened shelter, and that qualifies for dollars from the feds to construct it," Mr. Mapp said. "So that will happen at UVI, but it will be hardened to act as shelter for disasters."

It's long been a plan of Mr. Mapp's to erect a world-class sports and events center at the UVI campus on St. Croix. Back in May 2016 during UVI's commencement address, [the governor announced](#) that he'd included \$25 million in a capital projects budget for the building, but the development never happened as the territory found itself in [the worst financial condition that it'd ever faced](#).

After the initial failure, Mr. Mapp sought funding another way: he [approached Sinopec executives](#) -- a China mega corporation with substantial investments in the Limetree Bay Terminals facility, [which plans even further investments](#) -- arguing that as part of Sinopec's show of goodwill to a territory that it's building a long-term relationship with, it should foot the bill and in turn receive the rights to name the facility.

"That's about a \$25 million investment," the governor said in June 2016. "And the president of UNIPEC (same as Sinopec) has advised me that they would take it under serious consideration."

That attempt failed as well.

This time, though, the governor is confident that if a proposals is submitted that shows the facility will double as a shelter in times of disaster, the federal government would approve its construction with funds from the \$1.6 billion set aside for the territory.

Mr. Mapp's wide-net view of how the funds should be spent was backed up by H.U.D. Secretary Ben Carson. "Our goal is to get people back into their homes, get people back to work, to build a stronger U.S. Virgin Islands for future generations," Mr. Carson said [during an interview](#) with The Consortium on Wednesday. "These grants will restore homes and jobs, and repair critical infrastructure like roads, bridges, sewers, waterways, and also the island's electrical grid."

While Mr. Carson did not explicitly mention a sports and events center, he gave a wide range of areas where the funds could be used. Yet whether Mr. Mapp's impending request will meet the federal requirements of disaster spending, will only be determined at the time of submission and after it is scrutinized by federal reviewers.

As for a timeline, Mr. Mapp said his administration plans to submit to H.U.D. a proposal on how it intends to utilize the \$243 million that H.U.D. provided in February, by next Friday. For the \$1.6 billion, the governor said he expected a plan to be submitted in the next 60 to 90 days.