

The Virgin Islands Consortium

AECOM, Contractor That Won Bid For VI Home Repairs Program, Is Moving Too Slow, Mapp Says

Business / **Published On July 12, 2018 10:24 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **July 12, 2018**



Governor Kenneth Mapp said during a press conference on St. Croix Wednesday, that [AECOM](#), the contractor that won the bid for the Home Repairs VI Program and other rebuilding work in the territory, has been a disappointment, and the governor is hoping to open up the monumental amount of work to other contractors in hopes of speeding up the process.

"They got to get their game up; their game is slow," Mr. Mapp said during the press conference. The governor is hoping [APTIM](#), another major contractor, will be able to get some of the rebuilding work to hasten the reconstruction of the territory. (Aptim is also contracted to repair schools that were damaged but can still be used. The contractor is

already on St. Croix working on five such schools. Work include mold remediation and other repairs, and it's aiming for an August 28 completion date, according to company officials along with Department of Education representatives who were part of a media tour on Wednesday.)

"If they are prepared to accept the schedule of fees in the AECOM contract, we'll bring them on," Mr. Mapp said of APTIM.

The governor also expressed some misgivings with the Federal Emergency Management Agency about the program, stating that he'd told FEMA Administrator Brock Long and other officials of the agency, that the way in which the Emergency Home Repairs VI Program was structured stymied progress of repairing homes because of a two-step process that Mr. Mapp said wasted money.

The governor explained the two-step method to be the use of up to \$25,000 in the first step to make patchwork fixes to a property. The second step, he said, would include the breaking down of all the work done with the up to \$25,000, and the use of even more funds for a permanent fix. That strategy, Mr. Mapp stressed, was a big waste of dollars, and he said Mr. Long finally agreed to make the program a one-step effort with the aim of making the first set of repairs permanent.

Also at the press conference, Mr. Mapp reiterated his administration's plans for the funds, which were already outlined in a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) release [issued Tuesday](#).

The governor gathered key members of his cabinet to the event for a show of gratitude for their work in the HUD approval of the \$243 million. Among them was Daryl Griffith, the director of the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority, who detailed how the portion of funds allocated to V.I.H.F.A. would be expended.

ST. Croix

Est. Solitude (90 days)

The authority said it has development plans on the eastern side of St. Croix in Estate Solitude consisting of approximately 7.3 acres. This development has been designed and engineered to accommodate 20 lots at an estimated infrastructure cost of \$500,000 and home construction cost of \$3,500,000.

Mt. Pleasant (90 days)

Estate Mount Pleasant on the western end of St. Croix is in its final stage with infrastructure already in place, V.I.H.F.A. said. The authority is expected to construct 20 homes in this community at an estimated cost of \$3.5M.

St. Thomas

Whispering Hills (90 days)

Whispering Hills, the authority's flagship subdivision on St. Thomas, is slated for the development of 100 homes on 40 acres of which Phase I & II infrastructure has been

completed. Phase III infrastructure cost is estimated to cost \$1.7 M with home construction of 40 single family homes with an estimated cost of \$9.2 million. This property also allows for an additional development of 40 townhomes which will require further infrastructure development at a total cost of \$11 million, V.I.H.F.A. said.

Estate Fortuna (90 days)

The authority newest subdivision offering on St. Thomas will consist of 57, ¼ acre home sites on a total of 21 acres. The infrastructure cost for the subdivision will be approximately \$2.6 million with an estimated home construction cost of \$13.1 million.

The governor discussed plans to rebuild homes for the aged into modern complexes providing all the amenities that such facilities boast. On St. Thomas, the plan is to shutter the Queen Louise Home for the Aged, purchase the Sea View Nursing Home, and modernize it. On St. Croix, Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged would be completely redone as well. Both facilities would include long-term living, assisted living and independent living units, Mr. Mapp said, the latter housing seniors who can take care of themselves. The new facilities would also be able to withstand a strong hurricane and operate independently with food, water and utilities for six weeks following a storm, according to Mr. Mapp. The governor said he's forwarded legislation to the Senate for the purchase of Sea View.