

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Building In Golden Rock Will Be New Home Of Legislature On St. Croix

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ST. CROIX -- Senate President Myron Jackson and Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, the Senate's vice president, announced Friday that the Legislature purchased a building in Golden Rock that will house the Legislature on St. Croix moving forward.

Seen above, the facility, called the Jett Building, is located two plots away from the District Court in Golden Rock heading north.

"We are excited to have a place to call home, our central and senatorial staff have worked in two separate locations far longer than we anticipated," Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly, an outgoing lawmaker, said in a release the Legislature issued. The release, extremely

vague, did not reveal much about the purchase agreement. It also did not include the location of the building. Instead, the release came with a lot of quotes from Mr. Jackson and Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly reminiscing on the moments following Hurricane Maria's passage, and the issues the storm caused Legislative operations on St. Croix.

"Immediately following the hurricanes, we began to explore our options for relocation. We attempted to reach out to the Office of the Governor for assistance. Upon being turned down, our efforts led us to the two properties we have been operating out of since January," Mr. Jackson said.

Currently, the Legislature on St. Croix is located in downtown Christiansted at 1108 King Street and #36-C Strand Street. Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly in December 2017 [confirmed to The Consortium](#) that the Legislature had secured two six-month contracts for the spaces, costing \$3,000 and \$11,000 monthly. The rents were funded through a \$4 million appropriation. According to Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly, \$975,000 was set aside to purchase the building, of which the Legislature had made a down payment of \$50,000. The remaining funds, Mrs. Rivera-O'Reilly told The Consortium, would be used to remodel the facility.

The Legislature's move to Christiansted will affect the town of Frederiksted, where the Legislature had been located for years and had become a part of the culture of the town. Governor Kenneth Mapp has not been pleased with the move, [stating in January](#) that the lawmakers' decision to leave the building in Frederiksted, [seen here](#), was a misstep that would negatively impact the revitalization of the town.

"I was saddened to learn that the 32nd Legislature decided to permanently move out of Frederiksted," Mr. Mapp said. "As the members of this body are aware, the Chief Justice of our Supreme Court expressed his willingness to a joint venture with the Legislature to construct new facilities to house the VI Supreme Court and the St. Croix Legislature offices."

He added: "My friends, don't fret, I'm not getting in your lane. Your decision to permanently leave the town of Frederiksted is absolutely within your discretion. Your rejection of the offers made by me and the Chief Justice to work together on new facilities to remain in Frederiksted is absolutely yours. However, you know that the centerpiece of the economic revitalization of Frederiksted requires some level of government activity to drive private investment in the west-end town, and we were counting on you to do your part. You are letting us down."

With or without the Senate, though, Mr. Mapp said his administration along with the Supreme Court would move forward in building a modern facility, which the governor said would ensure the economic survival of the town. "The people of Frederiksted deserves no less," he said.

Mr. Jackson said he's committed to assuring a safe and healthy environment for employees of the Legislature. "When I took office at the beginning of this term, I made a statement regarding the welfare of the employees of this Institution. It did not sit well with the local media and members of our community. I made a commitment to improving the standard of health, and quality of life for our employees on St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas," he said.

The Senate president also expressed regret that the Legislature had to be moved to a new location. "I am reminded of the many locations of the Legislature we leased on Contentment Road and most recently at the Lagoon Street Complex. It pained us greatly to have to move out of Frederiksted after Hurricane Maria," Mr. Jackson said.

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