

The Virgin Islands Consortium

'Made In USVI' Pop-Up Store Aims To Inspire Residents, Visitors To 'Buy Local' For Holidays

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ST. THOMAS -- This holiday season, residents and visitors of the U.S. Virgin Islands will have the opportunity to purchase unique gifts from a variety of hand-crafted, locally-made products that will be sold on Main Street in St. Thomas, the Economic Development Authority (E.D.A.) said in a release issued Friday.

The Enterprise Zone Commission (EZC), an entity of the E.D.A., in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts (VICA), an agency of the Government of the Virgin Islands within the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources, will open a "Made in the USVI Pop-Up Store" on Main Street (Dronningens Gade) in December 2018 on St. Thomas in the I. Levin Building, according to the release. The building is in the vicinity of

the Enid M. Baa Library. The E.D.A. said the pop-up store will be open from December 15 through December 31 from Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.. Store hours will be extended for special events and will be closed Christmas Day on December 25, according to the release.

With the store's theme, "Made in the U.S. Virgin Islands": Where the Arts Meet Business", 25 manufacturers from across the territory that create products in the gift, art, bath & beauty and food & wine industries will be featured, the release says. These store artisans will also perform demonstrations of their products throughout the holiday season through December 31, 2018. The Made in the USVI Pop-Up Store will also enable the store artisans to develop partnerships.

"With this store, it is our desire to help these artisans stimulate partnerships among themselves and with potential buyers who visit the store this holiday season," said Nadine Marchena Kean, director of the Enterprise Zone Commission. "This is also an opportunity to help create new jobs through specific industry clusters that are featured within this store. This is significant in promoting economic development in the Territory," added Mrs. Marchena Kean.

Pop-Up stores are short-term stores that temporarily established in an available space to allow customers to experience products of a business first-hand. According to statistics from PopUp Republic, a retail marketing database, the pop-up shop industry was valued at \$50 billion in 2016. Pop-Up stores allow businesses, including start-ups and online businesses, to connect and form relationships with potential customers while business owners "test the waters" of having a brick-and-mortar store.

"Public spaces and marketplaces are essential ingredients in every community. We collaborated with the Enterprise Zone Commission to give our artists an opportunity to get their work exposed and increase their visibility," said Tasida H. Kelch, executive director, VI Council on the Arts. "It is my hope that this event will assist in maintaining cultural and commercial activity and play an influential role in fostering community driven cultural arts initiatives in the USVI," added Ms. Kelch.

"By having this "Made In the USVI Pop Up Store" situated in the historic I. Levine Building, we are also promoting local developer and accelerator centers and co-working spaces which can be used to help businesses showcase local, cultural products. The E.Z.C. wants to assist these businesses in their growth so that they may expand their production and retail facilities in the enterprise zones," said Mrs. Marchena Kean."

According to the release, the E.Z.C. assists residents and local small-business owners with rehabilitating properties that are located within designated enterprise zones in the territory. E.Z.C. also works with its strategic plan to help uplift these distressed neighborhoods that were once vibrant economic centers of the territory. The enterprise zones in the U.S.V.I. are Garden Street-Upstreet and Savanne-Downstreet on St. Thomas, and Frederiksted and Christiansted on St. Croix.