

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Island Green Collects \$200,000 After \$100,000 Match; Funds Will Benefit Zero Waste Initiatives, Sustainable Living Center

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At a fundraiser at [Eco Serendib Villa and Spa](#) last month, [Island Green Living Association](#) marked a critical \$200,000 milestone in its fundraising drive to create St. John's Sustainable Living Center (SLC), Island Green said Saturday.

More than \$100,000 was raised, with generous contributions from guests. As promised, Island Green President Harith Wickrema contributed \$100,000 in matching funds. Now an additional challenge has been extended: In honor of Earth Month, tax deductible contributions up to \$50,000 will be doubled through April 30, 2019, which will bring Island

Green well above the halfway mark of its \$500,000 goal. The event was attended by Senator Marvin Blyden.

The SLC, which is currently under construction and set to launch later this year, offers a groundbreaking approach to accelerating zero waste sustainability including facilities for composting, recycling glass, plastic and used cooking oil from restaurants (for power), solar energy, co-op food market and gardening, expanded ReSource Depot and thrift shop, green education and training and a community center, according to the release.

"I want to personally thank the donors for their generosity and encourage all of our neighbors to be a part of the effort and personally invested in making positive change. Our aim is 100% community engagement," explained Mr. Wickrema. "We appreciate the support from St. John Community Foundation, Friends of the VI National Park, UVI Caribbean Green Technology Center, and so many more. Island Administrator Shakima Jones has also been an important force in her efforts to bring Waste Management and Public Works to the table to make this a public/private partnership. We need all the help we can get to make zero waste initiatives a reality, providing a road map for other islands to follow."

The SLC is being created from what was an abandoned warehouse, located on a half-acre of government land at the intersection of Centerline Road and Giff Hill Road, which Island Green has leased for 35 years, the release said. It is being built to 5 Star Certified Island Green Building standards and intends to follow the guidelines of the Living Building Challenge 3.0. The Center will also serve as an emergency "safe room" during future hurricanes.

Among its many accomplishments, Island Green established the ReSource Depot on St. John, which has kept 290,000 pounds of building and other materials out of overflowing landfills and allowed them to be repurposed and otherwise utilized. Island Green has worked with the Department of Education and private schools to support sustainable curriculum and the organization has long advocated for restaurants to eliminate single use disposable plastic including straws, and to encourage them to compost and recycle, according to the release.

The nonprofit is behind the "Preserve our Paradise" initiative to promote aluminum recycling and has initiated countless beach cleanups of bottles, cans and other debris.

The organization has worked closely with the legislature on banning plastic bags, source separation and bottle deposit legislation and on efforts to ban plastic straws and sunscreen containing harmful oxybenzone. President Harith Wickrema was honored with an EPA Environmental Champion Award in 2017 in recognition of Island Green's accomplishments.

Donations can be made online at <https://islandgreenliving.org/donate/> or via check to:

Established in 2004, Island Green Living Association is a registered 501 (c)(3) not for profit organization on St. John dedicated to sustainability throughout the USVI. www.islandgreenliving.org.