

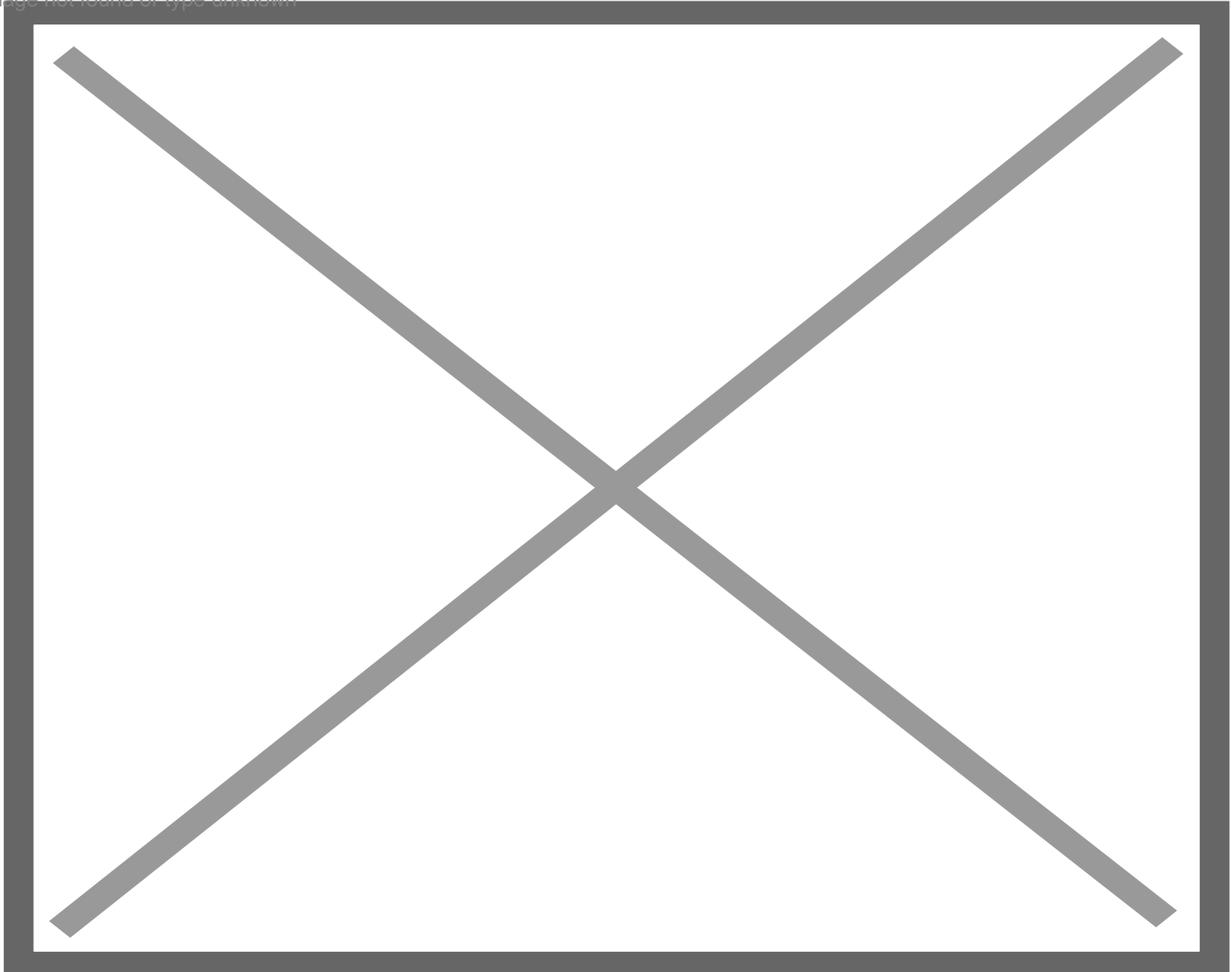
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Bryan Tours Condemned Tutu Hi-Rise as Demolition Commences to Make Way for New Facility

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ST. THOMAS — With demolition of the condemned Tutu Hi-Rise buildings ongoing for two weeks, Governor Albert Bryan over the past weekend visited the area to check on progress, Government House made known in a recently issued release.

Officers of the Virgin Islands Police Department did a sweep through the abandoned buildings on October 16 to check that they are empty and ready to be torn down, Government House said.

The release further stated that contractors have cleared the lots around the buildings and have started prepping the structures for demolition by securing plastic sheeting around the outside to minimize dust and debris. Beginning at the end of the week, workers will begin erecting 6-foot cyclone fencing around the site before the actual demolition begins, and the site will have 24-hour

security and VIPD is scheduled to make another sweep of the area.

“This is a significant step forward for our recovery, and the demolition of these condemned buildings is a tangible sign of our progress forward and Virgin Islanders’ resilience,” Mr. Bryan said. “While the destruction from Hurricanes Irma and Maria was a tragedy, it also provides the opportunity to rebuild modern, affordable housing opportunities, in safer housing communities that also provide economic development and self-sufficiency options for the people of St. Thomas.”

Virgin Islands Housing Authority Executive Director Robert Graham, whose agency is overseeing the demolition, said the future housing community that is built to replace the destroyed buildings will be a low-rise, low-density smaller community of 84 units, according to the release. The apartments will be larger than the previous units, and they will be energy-independent so residents won’t have power bills, he said.

“The demolition of these buildings is an epic moment,” said Mr. Graham. “It not only marks the first step in replacing the devastated Tutu Hi-Rise apartment community, but it is also the first project in a 10-year transformation of our entire housing portfolio that will vastly improve the living conditions of our residents.”

According to Government House, the first phase of the demolition was awarded to RG Engineering, Inc. for a cost of \$2,969,013, and it includes five buildings: Buildings 10, 11, 12, 14 and 22 for a total of 96 units that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) determined were hit hardest by the Category 5 hurricanes of 2017 and pose the highest structural risk.

The V.I. Housing Authority received a Notice to Proceed on October 19 to begin mobilization, with a date to complete Phase 1 of the demolition by May 17, 2021.

The demolition will begin at Building 14 and progress toward Building 10, and the demolition crews are scheduled to work from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday, according to the release.