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## Housing Finance Authority Buys Villa Morales Facility to House Homeless

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**Villa Morales property- Restaurant outdoor dining area. By. Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority.**

ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (V.I.H.F.A.) recently finalized the purchase of the Villa Morales property in St. Croix with 2018 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, the authority announced Friday. The acquisition, made with St. Croix's homeless in mind, was purchased with a \$600,000 allocation, V.I.H.F.A. said. The facility will provide up to 20 emergency shelter beds, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing for the homeless.

“We’re excited about the acquisition of the Villa Morales property, which will provide shelter for the homeless population on St. Croix,” said V.I.H.F.A. Executive Director Daryl Griffith.

“The authority is committed to helping reduce homelessness throughout the Territory. I co-chair the Virgin Islands Inter-agency Council on Homelessness, which was recently re-established by Governor Albert Bryan. I am happy to report back to the Council that the facility will soon be open to house our most vulnerable. We will be able to transform this cultural landmark into a shelter that directly benefits the St. Croix community,” Mr. Griffith added.



The authority will enter into a collaborative partnership with a nonprofit, community-based organization to manage the facility and provide wrap-around services, V.I.H.F.A. said. A portion of the facility is projected to be in service in early 2020, following some minor rehabilitation to the property.

The property, formerly known as the Villa Morales Restaurant and Guesthouse, located at 82A, B & C Estate Whim, includes a single-family residence; one two-story guesthouse with eight efficiency housing units; one main restaurant building with a large dining area and adjacent outdoor decks; and a several outbuildings, and storage areas. The property also has a vast area of vacant land prime for future development.

Closing the sale of the property has been in process for over a year, V.I.H.F.A. said. The acquisition is a part of the 2018 Community Development Block Grant cycle, administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through V.I.H.F.A.

The project was delivered on time in accordance with the December 31, 2019 target date outlined in the Action Plan.

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