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FEMA Awards Dept. of Finance \$4.7 Million to Refurbish its St. Thomas Offices

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V.I. Dept. of Finance building in St. Thomas. By. OFFICE OF DISASTER RECOVERY

The Office of Disaster Recovery announced Wednesday that FEMA recently awarded the V.I. Department of Finance \$4,694,496 to refurbish its offices on St. Thomas. The obligation will cover repairs to all five buildings and the parking area located in the historic district of Charlotte Amalie, O.D.R. said.

According to the release, these buildings house the financial hub of governmental operations. After the hurricanes in 2017, operational capacity was severely impacted. Currently operating at less than 40% of its capacity, the facility is in dire need of restoration. Despite the lack of space, the department continues to meet its obligations to the business community and employees of the

Virgin Islands government.

"Renovating the existing structures on St. Thomas is critical to the department's goals of augmenting personnel and streamlining internal operations," said Finance Commissioner Designee Bosede Bruce. "The Department of Finance is grateful for this obligation and will utilize these funds to ensure that our buildings are structurally sound and able to continue operations when faced with inclement weather."

Springline Architects is scheduled to begin working on the design of the new facility before the end of the month, and drawings should be finalized by May 2022, O.D.R. said. Since the buildings were constructed in the 1800s and lie within the boundaries of the Charlotte Amalie historic district, all refurbishments must follow the applicable guidelines for preserving and restoring historic buildings. Once complete, the project will be put out to bid.

"The Department of Finance is the backbone of the Territory's fiscal operations," said O.D.R. Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien. "We recognize the importance of this obligation and are excited for the staff as they take one step closer to regaining the full use of their space and restoring the historical look and significance of their buildings."

On St. Croix, the Department of Finance offices also sustained exterior and interior damages from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, according to the release. A solicitation for the refurbishment of the Leroy Quinn building was issued in June. However, the solicitation did not receive any bids and was closed. The procurement opportunity will be readvertised, incorporating an additional \$86,000 from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to strengthen the building and increase its resilience to future weather events.