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A Taste of the Reef: Frenchman's Reef and Noni Beach Resort Gives an Early Glimpse of What's to Come

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Robert Moore **December 18, 2019**

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Cheers.

DiamondRock Hospitality and the Marriott International toasted the holiday season on Tuesday with a splashy, wine-and-dine showcase of the upcoming Frenchmen's Reef and Noni Resort on St. Thomas' scenic southern shore.

Two years after Hurricanes Irma and Maria ravaged the resort, 100 or so guests got an early glimpse of the reimagined Frenchmen's Reef — for decades the territory's largest hotel and anchor of the local economy — along with the neighboring, upscale Noni Beach Resort.

“We are back,” said Tim Sheldon, president of Marriott International Caribbean and Latin America Division.

“This is an important moment for the Virgin Islands and an important moment for us,” said the Reef General Manager Kurt Wiksten, who relocated to St. Thomas from Wisconsin this summer.

“There’s been great support... (the V.I. government) has never said no. They asked how can we help.”

Gov. Albert Bryan, among dozens of dignitaries and corporate executives on hand, recalled memories of visiting Frenchman’s Reef back in the day. But looking forward, he said, is even brighter.

“We are in a new age in the Virgin Islands. ... our GDP is up. We’re building a new waterfront, we’re making a \$20 million investment to our St. Thomas airport. Our recovery efforts continue, and one of the things that will really signal the recovery of the Virgin Islands is the reopening of the Marriott,” Mr. Bryan said.

The Frenchman’s Reef reopening and Noni Beach Resort will bring nearly 500 guest rooms back to the territory.

DiamondRock Hospitality is spending upwards of \$300 million on renovations by next October, the projected opening of the Reef and Noni Beach sites.

The resort complex is designed by architects Whitespace Interiors. Included in the sprawling properties will be distinctive dining experiences via the restaurant concepts of acclaimed chef and restaurateur Richard Sandoval.

Mr. Wiksten, the Frenchman’s Reef general manager, said Virgin Islanders will be most welcomed guest at the world-class property. “All are welcome,” he said. “We want everyone to come and enjoy all we have.”