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HUD Secretary to V.I. Government: Use Federal Dollars Expeditiously Before It's Taken Away and Spent Elsewhere

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HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge, center, addressed local leaders during her visit to St. Thomas on Fri. April 1, 2022. By. GOV'T HOUSE

U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development Secretary, Marcia Fudge, told local leaders and nonprofits during her trip to the territory Friday that the USVI government must do all it can to spend federal dollars set aside for the territory in an expeditious manner, because the funds can be taken away for use elsewhere.

“What I am asking is for you to work with some urgency, and we want to help you do it,” Ms. Fudge said during the meeting, according to a Gov't House release. “In the president’s budget that

was released Monday, he's asking for 200,000 vouchers. But it doesn't make any difference how many vouchers we have if there's no place for people to live. So, again, we need to move with some urgency."

"This administration has put more dollars into states and territories than any president in history, and we need you to succeed... but we can't wait forever," she stated moments earlier. "One of the reasons I am here is to try to find a way to be helpful so that your recovery is stronger and more equitable."

According to Gov't House, the HUD secretary warned that Congress has only a finite amount of money and if they see little progress they will take funds and use them elsewhere, and she said the territory needs to use plentiful federal funding available in a way that is strategic and smart on things that are going to be resilient and long-lasting.

Ms. Fudge [visited the USVI Friday](#) and toured a number of HUD-funded projects. She also held meetings with government officials and local nonprofits. Governor Bryan joined a meeting virtually as he was in [Minneapolis, Minnesota cheering on Aliyah Boston](#).

"We really appreciate the attention the Virgin Islands has gotten on this matter and hope that while your there you're staying to see some of the issues that confront us on a daily basis in trying to get back to where we were four or five years ago," Governor Bryan said. "And I'm going to say that what we're experiencing at this time is not a recovery. It's a total transformation of the Virgin Islands, and I hope you'll have an opportunity to see our Magens Bay development to see the types of development that we're doing and the kind of housing that we have."

According to Gov't House, Interim V.I. Housing Finance Authority Executive Director Dayna Clendinen and V.I. Housing Authority Executive Director Robert Graham hosted Secretary Fudge and her staff and escorted them on walking tours of the affordable housing project underway in Estate Done that is part of the housing initiatives under construction to replace the Tutu Hi-Rise and Ras Valley housing communities that were destroyed by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

"Along with these funding opportunities, I was excited in our discussion to focus on other areas – such as providing technical assistance – in which we can help our stakeholders be successful," Interim Director Clendinen said. "In truth, charitable non-profits and governments are natural partners, as we serve the same constituents within the community. Therefore, the challenges of one are challenges for all, and working together allows us all to leverage our collective resources to serve our community even better."

Staff members traveling with Secretary Fudge included Deputy Assistant Secretary of HUD Alan Williams, HUD's Disaster Recovery and Planning Specialist for the Virgin Islands Jessie Huddleston and Efrain Maldonado, director of HUD's Puerto Rico/U.S. Virgin Islands Field Office.

The local nonprofit organizations that participated in-person and virtually from St. Croix included:

- Community First of St Croix
- St. Croix Long Term Recovery Group
- Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands
- Love City Strong
- Women's Coalition of St Croix
- Methodist Training Outreach Center

- St. Croix Foundation for Community Development
- Catholic Charities of the Virgin Islands
- Island Green Living Association-St. John
- St. John Community Foundation
- Continuum of Care, Inc., St. Croix
- Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands

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