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## With Limetree Bay Refinery Closed, Bryan Sees Construction Driving St. Croix Economy For Next Several Years

Business / **Published On June 07, 2022 06:44 AM /**

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Governor Albert Bryan on Monday said that construction will drive the St. Croix economy for the next several years, a projection that comes amid uncertainty at the Limetree Bay facility [as contention and hostility build](#) between the owners of Limetree Bay Terminals, and Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation and its partner West Indies Petroleum, the latter two being owners of the facility's refinery portion.

The refinery was shutdown in 2021, and though an auction sale to the aforementioned owners has been finalized, when and if refining will restart is anyone's guess. The governor did point to an upside of the refinery's closure, stating that had it been open, inflation would have been worse. "There are a lot of other private sector projects on St. Croix but there are two sides of a coin here

with the reopening of the refinery," he said. "Wages are already high in the Virgin Islands. Opening the refinery is going to put further pressure on the government, put pressure on the real estate market, and is going to put pressure on private sector businesses to compete in wages which will drive our inflation even more. So progress is good but it comes with a lot of pain points."

With uncertainty clouding the outlook of refining at the south shore facility, Mr. Bryan said construction will serve as a replacement for up to seven years. "I think for the next six or seven years it's going to be construction that's going to be the employment replacement and then St. Croix's tourism product is definitely growing," he said.

The governor then spoke of several projects either underway or pending. "We just [sold King's Alley](#), we are expanding. They are expanding King Christian Hotel to connect to that. They are adding more rooms. We are about to close on the [50-year lease with Hotel on the Cay](#). They are going to build 80 more rooms over there. There's an expansion plan for Green Cay, projects for the Castle, some for the Frederiksted Clover Quest — that property has been acquired as well too.

"There is a good investment base now for [a hotel at the airport](#). So tourism is coming along well. We do have the ship registry we've been talking about. The expansion of our transshipment, that's a \$65 million project. We are raising capital for that on the south shore. We also have the ship inspection and repair dry dock station that we are trying to get in renaissance. As well too, with the building of the [car track](#), horse track, [Frederiksted Ball Park \(Paul E. Joseph\)](#), as well as UVI we are putting in a stadium, the repair of Canegata, the soccer field that we have and the cricket pitch that we are building next to the soccer field out there in Estate Bethlehem.

"Sports tourism is another thing that we are looking at seriously, specifically for this island. There are couple of other projects that we want to definitely capitalize on. The industrial base that we have from the refinery all the way down to the airport is now the Southshore [Free Trade Zone Development Project](#). We have a lot of investment in there. I have allotted \$1 million to the Economic Development Authority for them to start to do the investigation of what can go there and how we can do it. Energy is a big part of that. So we are looking forward to that as well," Mr. Bryan said.