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U.S. Under Secretary Xochitl Torres Small Joins Plaskett on Recent Visit to St. Croix as Congresswoman Uses Influence to Advocate for USVI

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U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Under Secretary Xochitl Torres Small recently joined Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett on a visit to St. Croix. By. OFFICE OF DELEGATE TO CONGRESS STACEY PLASKETT

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Under Secretary Xochitl Torres Small recently joined Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett on a visit to St. Croix, as the congresswoman continues to leverage her influence in Washington to advocate for the territory.

Ms. Smalls joined Ms. Plaskett on March 21 in Frederiksted for a roundtable discussion with local agencies and stakeholders about USDA Rural Development programs that can help advance the

Virgin Islands.

"We discussed the programs available to build and improve housing, funding challenges and opportunities, provide renewable energy development assistance and make energy efficiency improvements, and financing for telephone and broadband services," Ms. Plaskett said. "USDA Rural Development has invested millions in the U.S. Virgin Islands – over \$15 million in just the last fiscal year with an investment of over \$5 million in single family housing, \$5.7 million in multifamily housing, as well as over \$100 thousand in water and environmental programs."

After the roundtable, the leaders toured BMR Energy's Solar Farm, which previously received \$3.2 million through the Rural Energy for America Program. The BMR Energy facility contains 16,000 solar panels and 9 inverters, which has reduced carbon emissions by 7,200 tons of carbon dioxide per year and increased energy stability for St. Croix. Additionally, Under Secretary Torres Small and I met with local entities involved in the economic development and broadband resiliency of the Virgin Islands," Ms. Plaskett said.

"The Biden-Harris Administration and USDA are committed to ensuring that people from all backgrounds have every opportunity to succeed – and that they can find those opportunities close to home," Under Secretary Torres Small said. "We're proud to partner with leaders like Congresswoman Plaskett to provide access to affordable housing, clean energy and critical telecommunications infrastructure to create those opportunities across the Virgin Islands."

Ms. Plaskett thanked Under Secretary Torres Small for visiting St. Croix "to see firsthand the opportunities – and challenges – facing the US Virgin Islands. I look forward to continuing our collaboration to promote a better future and a better Virgin Islands."