

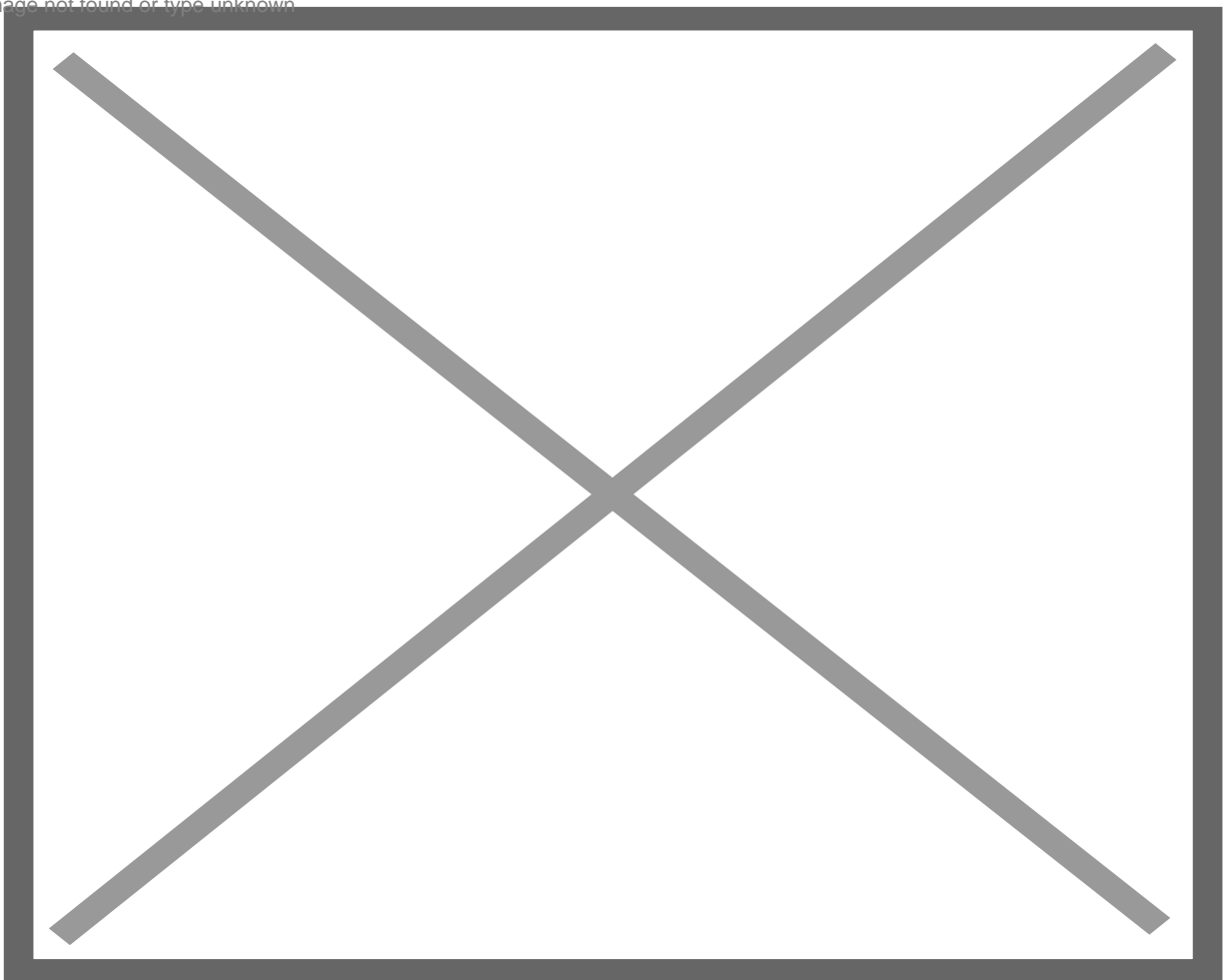
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St. Thomas Historic Preservation Committee Votes to Remove 'I Love STT' Sign from Vendors Plaza, Says Permission Should Have Been Sought Prior to Installation

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The "I Love STT" sign at Vendors Plaza in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas. By. GOV'T HOUSE

ST. THOMAS — In a recent decision meeting, the St. Thomas Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) voted against allowing the "I Love STT" metal sculpture to remain at Vendors Plaza.

Dept. of Property and Procurement Deputy Commissioner Vincent Richards had presented the sculpture as part of a broader initiative to enhance the plaza. Richards pointed out that similar

installations can be seen throughout the Caribbean, from Cuba to Barbados.

HPC's Committee Chair, Akil Petersen, inquired if the other sculptures, like those in Puerto Rico and Cuba, were located in historical districts. He found out that they were, but still expressed skepticism about the fit of the sign at the Vendors Plaza. "When people visit downtown, they want to capture the natural beauty, not pose with kitschy signs," Petersen insisted during the Thursday meeting. He suggested other locations for the sign like Yacht Haven, Magens Bay, or Lindbergh Bay but said it was unsuitable for the Charlotte Amalie historic district.

Committee member Enrique Rodriguez chose not to express his personal views on the artistic merit of the sculpture. However, he was concerned about the lack of prior consultation with the HPC. "You should have at least presented this to us before installing it," Rodriguez emphasized, imploring governmental agencies to regard the HPC as a relevant entity that should be consulted beforehand.

In alignment with Rodriguez, Sean Krigger, the acting director of the VI State Historical Preservation Office, indicated that any changes to the historic district need the committee's scrutiny and approval. He pointed out that previous discussions about installations at Vendors Plaza had focused on objects that would better harmonize with the area's historical ethos, such as an antique anchor.

Another Committee Member, David Knight Sr., questioned the consistency in the committee's approach. He referenced a sign at Cruz Bay that the HPC had unanimously opposed and wondered why there wasn't a similar reaction in this case. Labeling the sculpture as a "promotional gimmick," Knight criticized the committee's drifting focus from their core mission of preservation. He was of the opinion that such sculptures should only be located near cruise ship docks, and not within historical settings like Vendors Plaza. "It has to be removed," Knight concluded definitively.

The committee eventually voted on application HPC-40-2023, which consisted of multiple proposed improvements to the plaza, including sunshades for vendor booths, and a plan for managing food trucks. Excluding the controversial sculpture, three members approved the remaining items, while two voted against. The decision mandates that the "I Love STT" sculpture must be relocated to a more suitable venue.