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# V.I. Housing Authority Weighs Options for Williams Delight Homes: Demolition or Sale to Residents

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**A part of the Williams Delight community with some public housing and private homes.  
By. V.I. CONSORTIUM**

The V.I. Housing Authority is currently deliberating on whether to demolish or sell the 183 units in the Williams Delight public housing community in St. Croix. The ongoing discussions come as the VIHA grapples with a housing crisis in the territory and faces limitations in available funding for rehabilitation projects.

During a Senate committee meeting on Housing, Transportation and Telecommunications on Friday, Lydia Pelle, VIHA's chief operating officer, revealed that the original plan was to rebuild the homes, but the costs proved to be prohibitive. Responding to a query from Senator Marise

James, Ms. Pelle stated that some resident council members have expressed interest in purchasing the homes 'as is,' even those slated for demolition. However, Ms. Pelle admitted that such an approach is fraught with challenges. "There is a liability on the housing authority's part if we were to proceed with selling a home that is...certified by a structural engineer for demolition," she noted.

Sen. James warned against selling homes that are already certified for demolition, recalling the Castle Burke trailers placed as temporary housing following Hurricane Hugo in 1990. She argued that people in areas like Castle Burke often struggle to obtain financing for building homes. "Do not transfer as-is certified demolished homes to people because they're going to be there...two years from now," the senator cautioned.

The VIHA is still actively seeking unused ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds to assist in the demolition and rehabilitation of the Williams Delight units. The agency is facing the broader issue of a housing crisis in the territory, a point emphasized by Senator Donna Frett-Gregory. She criticized the lack of coordinated efforts among VIHA, the Housing Finance Authority, the V.I. Legislature, and the executive branch in addressing housing challenges. Ms. Pelle agreed, suggesting that a "bigger conversation" is necessary.

Part of that larger conversation would involve strategies for alleviating the extensive waiting lists for public housing. Ms. Pelle attributed the long waiting times to the poor condition of the existing housing inventory, which she described as "poorly designed, cheaply built, and inadequately financed."

While acknowledging that VIHA has a long-term plan requiring an estimated \$2 billion for full implementation, she also noted that the immediate focus remains on repairs affecting residents' health and safety. Ms. Pelle revealed that the repair costs for VIHA's 3,000-unit inventory would exceed \$200 million, a stark contrast to the \$10 million the agency receives annually.