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Bryan Voices 'Grave Disappointment' Over Removal of 'I Love St. Thomas' Sign, Criticizes Committee for Stalling Progress

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Bryan at Vendors Plaza in Charlotte Amalie looking at the "I Love STT" sign. By. GOV'T HOUSE

Governor Albert Bryan on Sunday expressed "grave disappointment" in the decision by the St. Thomas Historic Preservation Committee to remove the "I Love St. Thomas" sign from Vendors Plaza in Charlotte Amalie. The governor sees the move as an unfortunate setback to revitalization efforts in the territory.

"The vote and the subsequent comments made on Thursday by some members of the Virgin Islands Historic Preservation Committee are extremely disappointing," said Governor Bryan.

"These actions are indicative of how individuals continue to use this committee as a vehicle to hinder efforts and initiatives aimed at revitalizing our territory's towns."

Mr. Bryan finds it disheartening that a "small handful of individuals continue to stand in the way of progress" by using their personal opinions to obstruct improvement efforts supported by the majority of Virgin Islands residents.

While the governor emphasized the importance of preserving cultural and historic landmarks, he argued that the responsibility for such preservation should be based on reasonable applications of the committee's mandates, rather than the personal opinions of individual members.

During a recent meeting, the St. Thomas Historic Preservation Committee voted against allowing the "I Love STT" metal sculpture to remain at Vendors Plaza. Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Property and Procurement, Vincent Richards, had presented the sculpture as part of an initiative to enhance the plaza. Historic Preservation Committee Chair Akil Petersen questioned the suitability of the sculpture for the historic district of Charlotte Amalie, insisting that visitors prefer capturing the area's natural beauty rather than posing with "kitschy signs."

Committee member Enrique Rodriguez stressed the need for prior consultation with the Historic Preservation Committee before installing the sculpture, imploring governmental agencies to regard the committee as a relevant entity that should be consulted beforehand. Sean Krigger, acting director of the VI State Historical Preservation Office, echoed Rodriguez's concerns, stating that any changes to the historic district require the committee's scrutiny and approval.

Another Committee Member, David Knight Sr., questioned the consistency in the committee's approach. He criticized the sculpture as a "promotional gimmick," suggesting that such installations should only be located near cruise ship docks and not within historical settings like Vendors Plaza.

The committee eventually voted on application HPC-40-2023, which included multiple proposed improvements to the plaza. 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.