

Gerville R. Larsen, A.I.A. Testimony

Good Day Senators, Distinguished Guests and the listening audience:

I, Gerville Larsen, Vice – Chair, in conjunction with our Chair Pamela Richards Samuel are excited to see the results of our “In Search of Identity” project with the projects executed by the professors and students from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts – Schools of Architecture, Design and Conservation in Copenhagen and Aarhus University – School of Architecture. As most are aware by now, the project entails the restoration of the Old Barracks Complex in Christiansted into the UVI School of Architecture and Building Crafts and the Jarvis School in Charlotte Amalie into a National Museum and School of Conservation. A separate project as part of this Centennial effort is to restore the Battery in Cruz Bay, St. John into a museum.

The VI Transfer Centennial Commission believes this USVI – Danish partnership is the beginning of many more collaborative efforts that will occur between the Territory and the Kingdom of Denmark due to our shared cultural heritage. In a global economy, making logical links to help promote and further develop our economic growth is truly a win win undertaking and we view this project as the clear beginning of such efforts. I want to thank all the parties involved and they are too many to mention in full. On the Danish side, Senator Bo Manderup Jensen and Birthe luel of BYFO, Architect Ulla Lunn, Professors Christoffer Harlang – Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Associate Professor Thomas Kampmann, Mogens Morgen – Aarhus University On the USVI side, Governor Kenneth E. Mapp, Senator Myron Jackson, VI Transfer Centennial Commission, University of the Virgin Islands, Enterprise Zone Commission (EDA), VI A.I.A., and community stakeholders.

Now, let me walk you through a chronology of how we got to this point.

Virgin Islands Danish Apprenticeship (VIDA) Program – Ulla Lunn & Local Partners. 2000–2006.

“US Virgin Islands and Denmark – Our mutual heritage” Symposium at The National Museum of Denmark. Presenters: Ulla Lunn, Louise Serbo, Delegate Donna Christian, Senator Myron Jackson, Gerville Larsen, George Tyson, Shelley Moorehead. May 26th – 27th 2011.

Economic Development Authority (EDA) – Enterprise Zone Commission executes community town meetings/charettes in Christiansted and Charlotte Amalie/Savanne-Downstreet, Garden Street-Up Street to discuss concerns and issues in each town district. Town plan competitions are held for Christiansted and Garden Street-Up Street and Savanne-Downstreet. Christiansted Town Plan is selected and the winning plan is executed by Gerville Larsen, A.I.A. The V.I.A.I.A. produces the winning Garden Street-UpStreet plan. March – Dec. 2013.

BYFO, Association of Owners of Historic Houses in Denmark, with President Birthe luel, visits all 3 historic districts in the USVI from Denmark. They become impassioned to help preserve and conserve the mutual built heritage here in the USVI through a partnership with Denmark. They decide to pursue mutual fund raising for restoring (2) projects – 1 on St. Croix and 1 on St. Thomas. May 2014.

Senator Myron Jackson proposes a project to the VI Transfer Centennial Commission entitled "In Search of Identity" which is adopted by the Commission. 2015.

VI Transfer Centennial Commission, Chair Pamela Richards Samuel, Vice Chair Gerville Larsen and Senator Myron Jackson visit Denmark to negotiate logistics of these 2 proposed restoration projects and engage the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts- School of Architecture in Copenhagen for the National Museum in the Jarvis School in Garden Street/Up Street (Garden Street Town Plan) and the Aarhus University – School of Architecture for the University of the Virgins Islands School of Architecture and Building Crafts in Christiansted Old Barracks Compound (Christiansted Town Plan). October 2015.

Partnerships between USVI and Denmark are solidified and the Danish Architecture professors and students arrive to do measuring work. March 2016.

I want to express a heartfelt thank you to the Danish architectural schools that have participated in this project. It is not only a momentous undertaking between the USVI and Denmark, but it is the first collaboration between these (2) prestigious Danish architecture schools, so this project establishes several firsts. As described above through the chronology of this project, historic restoration projects can take some time to become a reality. As displayed by the exhibition of student projects yesterday, the architectural students have executed these projects with the programs related to the new functions being given to these buildings. The Territory will soon see the student projects in an exhibit in the VI which will allow the community to provide additional input on what will become the final designs for these important sites. Continued fund raising for these projects will be on going and, once we have the total amounts needed, these projects will go from paper to being constructed.

We need continued support and interest from all community stakeholders to ensure these projects will come to fruition. Through these types of diverse partnerships, we can truly build community engagement and support for our cultural resources and get more buy in to do more preservation and conservation projects in our towns: a much needed effort especially in our historic districts. Through our shared mutual heritage with Denmark, we can realize these important and community driven projects that present this history in a modern way and also, in the most positive light possible.

Thank You.