



GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES
St. Thomas/St. John Historic Preservation Committee**

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Felipe Ayala II, Chairman

Robert G. Moron, Vice Chairman

Commissioners: Ronald Lockhart and Matt Eckstein

December 5, 2013

Dear Senator Millin Young,

The Historic Preservation Committee strongly supports the ban on "Barking" as proposed in the amendment to Bill 30-0002. The "Barking Practice" does not provide a positive image of our Island and guests to our Historic District.

The Committee has received numerous complaints from residents and visitors concerning this practice. The complaints usually reflect the aggressive nature, hustle, and intimidation most Barkers have. They hassle and intimidate tourists and usually provide misinformation about their competitors. The Committee recognizes the competitive nature of the jewelry business, but this practice degrades the entire experience of shopping downtown. The other three main shopping areas, Havensight Mall, Yacht Haven Grande, and Crown Bay Center all ban this competitive aggravation from their properties. These are privately held areas, so the ban is enforced. In the Historic District, it's a free for all. Downtown Charlotte Amalie, which has not only a shopping center but a wonderful history to promote, is further degraded. The history is often over shadowed and the charm of the architecture lost, due to a lack of enforcement of the rules that govern this area.

As a government, we talk a good game! Historic Preservation is often a political buzzword inciting applause. The reality is, and the evidence shows, we really don't care. If we were serious about our product, we would not have to spend the time convincing others that these practices are not in the best interest of our town. We would simply do away with them and enforce existing laws. Our island's competitors realize the importance of their tourism product and the quality of their guest experience. They have all proposed legislation to ensure that these problems and blight do not affect their tourism product.

The approval of this ban and the revitalization of this historic and commercial district could become the signal that we are serious about our tourism product, and quality of life issues, in the Virgin Islands.

Sincerely yours,

for Felipe Ayala Jr.
Felipe Ayala Jr.
Chairman