



PO Box1500 St. Thomas, VI 00804
T 340.774.2501 F340.774.2602

Dear Honorable Committee Chair, Honorable Senators, distinguished guests and the viewing public,

My name is Gautam Daswani and I am the President of Downtown Revitalization Inc. also known as DRI. DRI is a non-profit, private sector organization (made up of private sector businesses and individuals) where the goal is to create a shared, coherent vision for the redevelopment and revitalization of Charlotte Amalie. Since 2009, DRI has worked with the public sector on a strategic plan to affect positive change with goals leading to a revitalized and energized Downtown for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

Without getting into points on the fact that the Main Street Revitalization project is severely delayed, islands such as Tortola and St. Kitts which like St. Thomas are on the Eastern Caribbean Cruise ship run have in the last 3-5 years built cruise ship piers and terminals and are taking cruise ship calls away from St. Thomas, and that the difficult global economic climate continues, the focus of my points here today will be from Nov 2015 forward, the time the project was announced to move forward by Community Announcement at Government House.

As a private sector entity, DRI has attempted to work in total collaboration with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to make the flow of information as smooth and as easy as possible for Main Street businesses, residents and visitors. With the project being under the total control of DPW, DRI comprehends that even though we do not control how the construction entity (in this case Tip Top) establishes the work schedule, handles the task of construction or supervises the construction site, we understood we could be a link to businesses, residents and visitors so that proper and timely information was provided.

In Jan. 2016, we undertook establishing a second MOU between DPW, DRI and the St. Thomas – St. John Chamber of Commerce (COC) so a formal agreement could be in place through which the private sector organizations (DRI and COC) would have an established link to work with DPW. The MOU has yet to be signed by DPW. Between Jan 2016 and July 2016, a series of meetings took place in which DRI and the COC were given assurances that construction on Main Street would begin. On May 27, 2016 DPW issued a press release announcing the commencement of work scheduled for May 31, 2016. Construction work did not begin and DRI and the COC again began to question Tip Top's ability to conduct a project of this magnitude. Tip Top's ability to secure the required bond and financial status also came into question.

The private sector organizations (DRI and the COC) were yet again given assurances that Tip Top was more than capable of implementing, conducting and concluding the Main Street Revitalization project as per their signed contract with DPW. DRI is concerned and willing to assist in all efforts to restore and re-authorize funding for this project.

In addition, DRI remains committed to assist DPW on this vitally important construction endeavor. The livelihood of our residents, our ability to attract visitors on an annual basis and our Virgin Islands Economy also deeply depends on a revitalized Main Street. Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the current status of this issue.

Best Regards,



Gautam Daswani

President – DRI