

Testimony of Enrique Rodriguez

Managing Partner, Submarine Base Warehouse, LLC

Regarding Lease Agreement at Crown Bay Fill

Before the Honorable Novelle E. Francis, Jr., Chairman

Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance

36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Earle B. Otteley Legislative Chambers, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

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Good morning, Chairman Francis, and members of the Committee, Senate and listening public.

My name is Enrique Rodriguez, and I appear before you on behalf of Submarine Base Warehouse, LLC.

This proposal at Crown Bay Fill isn't just about a lease—it's about putting idle government land back to work. It's about jobs, steady revenue for the Government, and visible progress for the people of St. Thomas.

I was raised here in St. Thomas, where my family has proudly called this island home for five generations. My family also runs one of the few local businesses that has survived through three generations.

About thirty years ago, the old Blake family home at No. 11 Crystal Gade in downtown Charlotte Amalie had been left to rot for decades. People walked by and said it couldn't be saved. I was young, broke, and maybe a little foolish—but I bought it anyway. I restored the crumbling home. Today, it stands strong again, part of the living fabric of our historic town.

That was my first real lesson in redevelopment: when you love this place, you don't wait for someone else to fix it—you do what you can, with what you have.

Since then, I've been fortunate to work on projects big and small—shopping centers, private homes, schools, and other historic restorations. I now serve on the Historic Preservation Board, where I do my part to help protect the character of our islands. And through those experiences, I've learned that restoring a building is never just about construction—it's about faith in the future.

A few years ago, I went into debt for nearly a million dollars to repair a government-owned facility that had been neglected since Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Tenants had been working under a leaking roof, and the Government hadn't collected rent for years. I knew I wouldn't see a return for a long time—but

people needed a safe place to work, the Government needed rent flowing again, and I saw an opportunity. That building now supports small businesses, steady employment, and reliable revenue for the Territory.

I share that story for one reason: I don't just talk the talk—I walk the walk.

My approach has always been to blend opportunity with service, ensuring that each project creates both community benefit and financial sustainability.

Redevelopment isn't only about concrete and steel, it's also about culture.

When Kareem Forbes and the Generation Fusion Steel Pan Band needed a place, I opened my doors and gave them a space to store their instruments and practice. When the Infernos Carnival Troupe needed space to get ready for Carnival, I gave it to them.

Now, I'm asking for the opportunity to bring that same spirit to the old Inspection Lane building and the undeveloped lot at the entrance to the container port in Subbase. These properties have been idle for years—no rent, no jobs, no return. With the right investment, they can become part of the new fabric of the Subbase Corridor, providing storage, logistics, and commercial capacity the Virgin Islands sorely needs.

My vision is to develop warehouse space, bulk storage, expanded parking, and other subtenant opportunities. These improvements will directly support the more than \$20 plus billion in public and private infrastructure investments now on the horizon.

The companies I manage employ more than twenty Virgin Islanders directly, and our tenants support over two hundred local jobs. I say that with humility, because I know every job represents a family that can plan for tomorrow.

This proposal isn't just about profit, it's about purpose. It's about turning dormant land into productive property, generating income for the Government, creating stable employment, and strengthening the foundation of our local economy.

We stand at a crossroads. These sites can continue to sit idle, or they can become part of the solution—evidence that the Virgin Islands is ready to move forward.

There's a saying my grandfather loved that I will translate into English:

“We do not inherit the land from our ancestors—we borrow it from our children.”

That's how I see this work. I'm asking—not for a favor, but for a chance—to keep doing what I've always tried to do: take what's been left behind and make it useful again, for the next generation of Virgin Islanders.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration.
I welcome your questions.

Respectfully,

Enrique Rodriguez
Managing Partner, Submarine Base Warehouse, LLC