



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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March 16, 2026

Honorable Milton E. Potter  
President  
36th Legislature of the United States Virgin Islands  
Capitol Building  
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

Re: Petition to Amend Official Zoning Map No. STZ-9, Application No. CCZP0095-25

Good day Senate President Milton E. Potter, members of the 36th Legislature, legislative staff, and members of the public. My name is Leia LaPlace-Matthew, and I am the Territorial Planner with the Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning (CCZP) within the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR). I am here to present the Department's recommendation on Zoning Map Amendment Application No. CCZP0095-25.

This application was submitted by Selwyn and Asiah Clendinen Gumbs, seeking to amend the zoning designation of Parcel No. 19-2-111 Estate Smith Bay, Nos. 1, 2, and 3 East End Quarter, St. Thomas, from A-1 (Agricultural Zone) to R-3 (Residential-Medium Density). The purpose of the request is to design two apartments within the existing bottom-floor footprint of a two-story building, resulting in a total of three residential units within the structure.

At present, the property is a two-story, two-family dwelling, with a three-bedroom unit on the upper floor and a two-bedroom unit on the bottom floor. It is proposed that the bottom floor be converted into two rental units: a one-bedroom unit and a two-bedroom unit. Conversion into the rental units would require minimal work, as an existing laundry/storage room will be transformed into a kitchen. The applicants estimate the work can be completed in approximately two weeks.

DPNR has conducted an exhaustive review of the application, including analyzing adjacent land use, zoning trends, past approvals, infrastructure capacity, and public input. The surrounding area includes a diverse mixture of zoning designations: A-1, A-2, R-1, R-2, R-3, B-2, B-3, and C-Commercial, with 20 rezonings granted historically in this section of Estate Smith Bay.

The Department notes the following key findings:

- Water needs are met by three existing cisterns totaling 33,000 gallons. Sewage is handled by an existing private 2,250-gallon dual septic system. Sufficient capacity is provided for the proposed three dwelling units configuration.
- The property has adequate space for 10+ parking spaces, exceeding the three spaces required by Code for the proposed dwelling units.
- The structure functioned as a four-dwelling-unit building for 30 years, indicating prior capacity for multi-family use.
- The site fully complies with R-3 development provisions.

- The proposed density of nine persons maximum, is well below the 28-person density allowed by the R-3 zone.
- No environmental or community impacts were identified.

At the DPNR-CCZP public hearing held December 29, 2025, no opposition or concerns were expressed regarding the proposal, and no post-hearing comments were received.

The request is consistent with the 2024 Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan, which identifies the severe territory-wide shortage of diverse and affordable housing options as one of the most pressing challenges facing Virgin Islands residents. The Comp Plan emphasizes the need for additional housing types that serve lower-income, middle-income, young adults, families, and seniors; needs that the applicants' proposal helps address on a small but meaningful scale.

After evaluating the applicant's request, the surrounding area's zoning trends, the past nonconforming multi-family use, the site's infrastructure capacity and ability to fully comply with the R-3 zoning, no objections from neighbors, and the territory's broader housing needs, the Department finds the rezoning request to be appropriate, reasonable, and supportive of community housing goals.

The Department of Planning and Natural Resources recommends approval of the zoning map amendment request from A-1 (Agricultural Zone) to R-3 (Residential-Medium Density). Pursuant to Title 29 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 3, Section 238, the report of the Planning Office regarding this proposal, including the detailed reasons for our recommendation, is incorporated into the records submitted prior to this Committee of the Whole Hearing. We respectfully request that the PowerPoint presentation for CCZP0095-25 now be displayed.

This concludes the testimony on behalf of the Department, and we are available to answer any questions.