



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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May 11, 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. SJZ-7, Application No. CCZP0104-25

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, Territorial Planner with the Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning (CCZP) within the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPR). I am here to present the department's recommendation on Zoning Map Amendment Application No. CCZP0104-25.

This application, submitted by the Government of the Virgin Islands, requests a use variance to the P (Public) zoned Plot No. 300-B Revised Cruz Bay Town, Cruz Bay Quarter, St. John, for the purpose of allowing the development of a three-station car wash facility. The proposed car wash would be the only such facility on St. John; serving residents, businesses, and tourists.

DPR has conducted an exhaustive review of the application, including an analysis of adjacent land use, zoning trends, infrastructure, and public testimony. The neighboring area is characterized by B-2 (Business-Secondary/Neighborhood) and P (Public) zoning districts and uses.

The Department notes the following key findings:

- The intent of the use variance is to allow the construction of a two-story building comprising of a car wash and cashier booth on the first floor. The second floor will be utilized by the lessee for a non-public office use.
- Parking for six employees will be provided off-site at the lessee's existing car rental business, which is across the street.
- Operations of the car wash would run from 6 am to 10 pm.
- The project entails demolition of an existing slab and completion of construction in approximately 18 months.
- Over 15 years ago, the site operated as a restaurant and bar.
- Infrastructure needs, including water and sewage, will be served by public utility lines.
- No other DPR division reviews are required other than permits for new construction.

At the DPR-CCZP public hearing held December 30, 2025, there were four commenters and two post-hearing email submissions. Public input summarized below were:

- Requests for adequate lighting to discourage loitering.
- Requests for Sunday operations to begin after 12:00 p.m.
- Concerns regarding drainage, specifically the need to prevent flooding or water buildup.

- Surrounding neighbors show strong support for this project. They highlight petitioners' reputation for responsible business practices, good communication, and community service, including confidence that the business will benefit St. John.

The Department's analysis found the following key findings:

1. The proposed car wash use is not permitted in the current P-Public zoning district according to the Zoning Table of Permitted Uses.
2. In evaluating this use variance request, DPNR considered several precedents from the past decade in which the government leased public land for private ventures that provided public benefits, ranging from housing, propane operations, hotels, soccer fields, car rental operations, and business expansions.
3. The proposed car wash is consistent with existing surrounding ventures which are primarily commercial in nature.
4. It would be beneficial to the public, as it would supply an essential service currently unavailable on St. John.
5. This car wash is supportive of the government's intent to diversify the types of permissible enterprises on leased public land, promoting controlled and productive economic development.
6. The project aligns with the broader goals of leveraging government-owned properties to meet community needs while retaining public ownership of essential land resources.

After reviewing the applicant's request and assessing the current zoning against the need for diversity in business enterprises on St. John, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources recommends approval of the requested use variance and concurs with Bill No. 36-0268.

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 CCZP0104-25 now be displayed

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