



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. SCZ-20, Application No. CCZP0008-25

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 (DPNR). I am here to present the department's recommendation on Zoning Map Amendment Application No. CCZP0008-25.

This application, submitted by the Virgin Islands Department of Health, seeks to amend the zoning designation of Plot Nos. 11-F and 11-G Estate Penitentiary Land, Company Quarter, St. Croix from R-3 (Residential-Medium Density) to P (Public). The purpose of the request is to bring the property into zoning compliance for the BSL-3 Public Health Laboratory and Emergency Medical Services offices.

DPNR has conducted an exhaustive review of the application, including an analysis of adjacent land use, zoning trends, infrastructure availability, as well as public input. The neighboring area is zoned R-3, C-Commercial, and P-Public with two prior rezonings, Act Nos. 4181 and 5905.

The Department notes the following key findings:

- The site, formerly the Ralph de Chabert Housing Project, is leased from the Virgin Islands Housing Authority.
- The surrounding area includes residential, commercial, and public uses, which includes a fire station and the Juanita Gardine K-8 school.
- The proposed use will be conducted in the two-story buildings designated for office and laboratory functions. The laboratory will not be open to the public.
- Water and sewage needs will be met by public infrastructure.
- No additional DPNR division reviews are required.
- At the DPNR-CCZP public hearing held March 25, 2025, concern regarding the permanent use of the site was raised. Subsequently, it was clarified that the site will be used as a non-public-facing lab and office.
- No opposition or post-hearing comments were received.

- This petition follows ten previous petitions for rezoning government-owned properties to P (Public) in accordance with Title 29, Chapter 3, Section 229(q) of the Virgin Islands Code, which mandates that publicly owned properties be shown as zoned P-Public on zoning maps.
- In accordance, ten similar rezonings have been approved since 2022 for government agencies across the territory.
- Additionally, these rezonings bolster eligibility for federal disaster recovery funding.

After reviewing the applicant's request, the Department finds the proposed rezoning to be consistent with legal requirements and the intended public use of the property. Thus, the department recommends approval of the zoning map amendment request and concurs with Bill No. 36-0270.

Pursuant to Title 29 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 3, Section 238, the report of the Planning Office regarding this proposal, including the 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 CCZP0008-25 now be displayed.

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