



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-12, Application No. CCZP0118-25

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. CCZP0118-25.

This application, submitted by CDP, LLC, seeks a use variance to the B-2 (Business-Secondary/Neighborhood) zoned Plot No. 295-D-2 Estate Barren Spot, King Quarter, St. Croix. The purpose of the request is to allow "Warehouse & Storage Services (General)" as the principal use, specifically, the development of a self-storage facility comprising 491 climate-controlled units. The property lies within an active commercial subdivision bordered by Home Depot and AutoZone to the north and east, Melvin Evans Highway to the south, and a residential subdivision elevated 50 ft above the site to the west.

At the DPNR-CCZP January 28, 2026 public hearing, the applicant's representative, Attorney Kevin A. Rames, testified that the parcel is part of a commercial subdivision under phased development for nearly 19 years. The proposal includes two fully enclosed air-conditioned storage buildings (One, two-story building and the other a single-story building); approximately 6,000 sq. ft. of building footprint; 12 parking spaces; construction timeline of 10-12 months; and two employees for facility operations.

The current B-2 zoning allows various commercial and service uses but does not allow self-storage facilities as a principal use, hence the request for a use variance.

No opposition or concerns were expressed with the proposal at the January 28th hearing, and no post-hearing comments were received.

The Department evaluated the request in relation to the existing B-2 zone, which currently allows 197 different uses spanning residential, retail, office, automotive, industrial, wholesale, storage, public services, and utilities categories. The 2009 Rutgers and Duncan & Associates Assessment of the Virgin Islands Zoning and Subdivision Codes noted that the current Table of Permitted Uses is outdated, overly specific, and in some cases inefficient for modern land-use needs.

The Assessment recommended grouping similar uses rather than making narrow distinctions. Under this modernized framework, wholesale, storage, and distribution-related uses, including various types of wholesale food storage, distribution operations, and bottled water storage, are already permitted in B-2 and are functionally similar to self-storage facilities.

The use variance request is also compatible with the 2024 USVI Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan because it places a low-impact commercial service use in an appropriate commercial area, is functionally consistent with permitted B-2 uses, advances Comp Plan goals for modern, flexible land-use interpretation, relies on existing infrastructure and avoids land-use conflict, and supports orderly commercial infill and economic activity.

Based on this analysis, the Department finds that the proposed warehouse and general storage use is compatible with surrounding commercial uses; the facility aligns with the existing character and development patterns of the commercial subdivision; and the use variance would address an inconsistency in the zoning code by treating self-storage similarly to other allowed storage-related uses. A recommendation of approval does not undermine the Comp Plan; rather, it implements its intent in the context of an outdated zoning framework. Therefore, Pursuant to Title 29 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 3, Section 238a, DPNR recommends approval of the requested use variance to allow "Warehouse & Storage Services (General)" as a permitted use.

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 for CCZP0118-25 now be displayed.

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