

[EXTERNAL MAIL]Application for rezoning Plot Nos. 50-1 and 50-4 Estate Orange Grove, Company Quarter, St. Croix, to allow cement block manufacturing - ZAC-22-14

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Good Afternoon Mrs. Laplace

It was recently brought to my attention that an application for the rezoning of Plot Nos. 50-1 and 50-4 Estate Orange Grove, Company Quarter, St. Croix, to allow cement block manufacturing, was submitted by The Innovative Asset Group Inc. Naturally, creating a concrete plant would benefit the economy. However, I strongly object to the proposed location. I support economic development in the territory. However, as a physician on the island of St. Croix and a resident of Little Princess Hill, it is prudent to investigate the potential health implications of a cement block manufacturing plant on the well-being of residents in the proposed area.

The production of concrete carries many environmental and health concerns. The proposed location for the cement plant is within the vicinity of residential housing, businesses, and schools. Consequently, you must carefully consider the potential health implications of cement dust. Cement dust can **irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and upper respiratory system**. Additionally, skin contact with particles may result in moderate irritation, thickening/cracking, and severe skin damage from chemical burns. Concrete dust can lead to Asthma, Chronic obstructive lung disease, and restrictive lung disease. Silica exposure can lead to lung injuries, including silicosis and lung cancer.

Importantly, what measures have the Innovative Asset Group Inc proposed to mitigate potential health risks from concrete dust? The cement industry is one of the leading producers of carbon dioxide, a potent greenhouse gas. Concrete causes damage to the most fertile layer of the earth, the topsoil. I also query what energy source will be used to produce these cement blocks. Concrete dust inhalation and contamination are dangerous, and the energy source used to create them is equally important.

In a Source publication dated 5/10/2016:

Then Sen. Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly said that "when the rezoning was heard in committee, it was "made clear there is no written, concrete plan for development." She said the rezoning includes "150 uses," from bars to mechanic shops, and if some homes are built and businesses added later, owners may be surprised and dismayed".

"Not all buyers are sophisticated enough to ask what other types of businesses might pop up. I would hate to see that hill overdeveloped with businesses that are a nuisance. ... I submit that if someone builds a \$250,000 house, they do not want a mechanic shop or nightclub opening up down the street," she said. "Do not dictate what might be developed on that property in my district without making an informed decision," she said.

Similarly, then Sen. Tregenza Roach said he opposed the rezoning, saying "nearby property owners should have some assurance that if they build a home, the government will not come in later and change nearby zonings to change the character of the neighborhood".

As referenced above, the issue of rezoning in this area was anticipated and is a genuine concern. Presently, the land above the proposed site is subdivided for residential housing, and parcels have been sold. In addition, as a major thoroughfare into Christiansted, the cement plant would be an eyesore. The excavation that has taken place thus far is aesthetically unpleasing. Consider tourists en route to Christiansted with this potentially intrusive structure. Lastly, the traffic intersection is well designed for present use but would require revisions to accommodate the heavy equipment and increased traffic. Has a proposal for the road redesign been submitted with this rezoning request? It is equally important to consider other development projects in this area which will impact traffic patterns as well..

Finally, when reviewing the application for rezoning this area to create a cement block manufacturing plant, please be thoughtful about the immediate and potential long-term implications for community residents.

Best Regards,

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