

“Preserving our Past... Creating Our Future”



A Comprehensive
Study on the
Impact of
Deteriorating
Historic
Neighborhoods
and What Can Be
Done



April Newland Legislative Chair Kerstin McConnell 2012 President



Virgin Islands Territorial
Association of REALTORS®



Preserve our historic neighborhoods

On behalf of
**The Community
Alliance to
Preserve Our
Historic
Neighborhoods**

Who is the Alliance?

Broad-based community coalition
of groups and concerned
citizens

- Civic, religious organizations
- Neighborhood groups
- Trade associations
- Historic preservation groups

All sharing the goal of
preserving our heritage and
restoring these historic
properties.



We gathered the facts.....

1. Researched the Properties

Assembled a comprehensive data base on the 2,741 properties in the three National Historic Districts

- Charlotte Amalie 1,408
- Christiansted 860
- Frederiksted 502
- Public records data, tax rolls, ownership, zoning, etc.

2. Tested Public Opinion

Conducted a professional public opinion poll to learn residents opinions about the deteriorating historic properties and what should be done.

Facts cont'd....

3. Took a Look Around

Researched what other islands and communities are doing with their historic properties

4. Identified the problems they cause

5. Identified the benefits of preservation



The problems they cause.....

- Near commercial and tourist areas. Definite threat to public safety.
- Havens for crime, drugs, trash, vermin and squalor.
- Neighbors experiencing a rise in crime and threat to their property values.
- Produce little to no tax revenue. Millions in back taxes. Many taxed as vacant land.
- Consume disproportionate share of police and other resources.
- Government properties produce no taxes but large legal liability for their “owners” – the Virgin Islands taxpayers



The benefits of restoration

- Cut crime
- Create jobs
- Clean up neighborhoods
- Create tax producing properties
- Reduce government liability
- Increase housing stock
- Keep us competitive in the Caribbean



How many are there?

- 451 historic properties rated Fair to Poor, i.e. “endangered”
- 131 of them are historic



What do our citizens say about scenes like this?



Public Opinion Poll Results

- Public's top concerns (in order).
 - Crime/public safety
 - Economic growth/economy
 - Utility rates
 - Budgeting/cutting spending
- 82% said they were concerned over the negative impact of these vacant buildings (46% said very concerned.)
- 81% (55% strongly): "Support restoring & preserving historic properties"



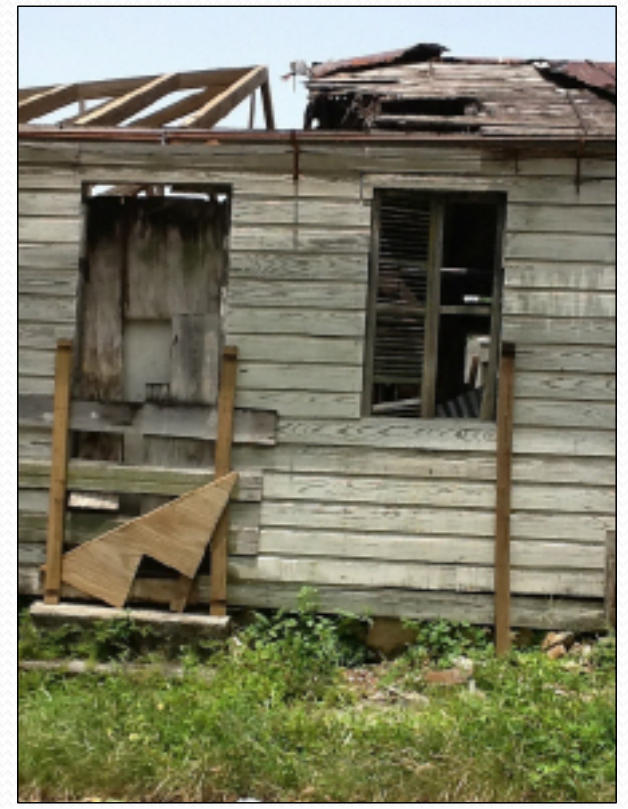
Public Opinion Poll Results

- 72%: “Existing codes should be enforced with strong fines.”
- 77% said “sell government properties. Put back on tax rolls.”
- 77%: “Public-private partnerships would be effective method.”
- 61%: “More police patrols in historic areas.”



Concerns & Opportunities

- Need common set of definitions for historic properties
- Need standardized rating system for “historic value”, pre-approved uses and amount/type of restoration required.
- Not every property can be 100% restored. Need flexibility for restorations that make economic sense.



Concerns & Opportunities

- Current permitting process, authority, responsibility and appeal process should be reviewed as part of the solution.
- Fines and incentives should be equally strong to be effective motivators.



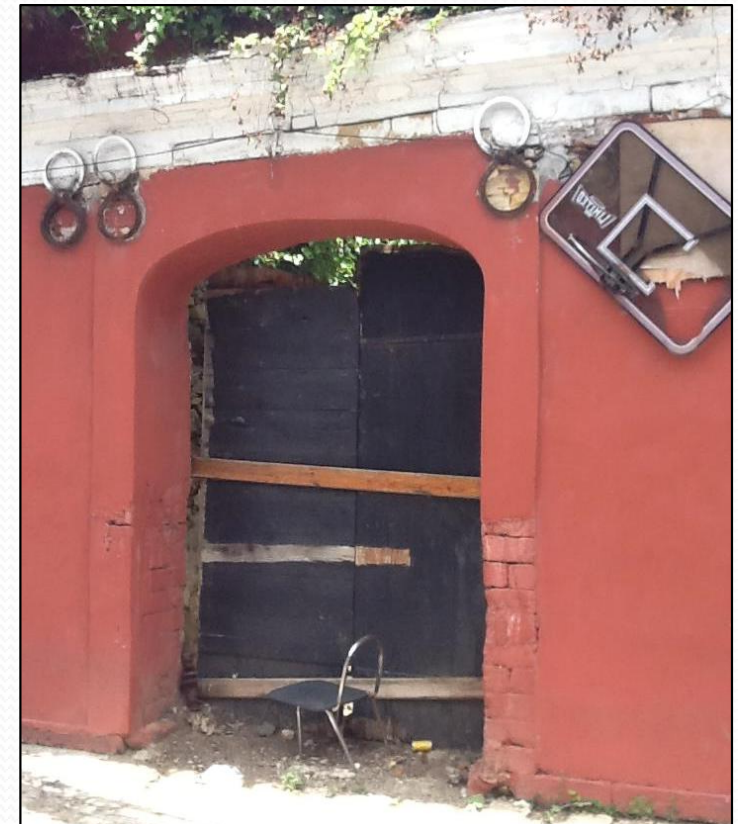
Concerns & Opportunities

- We need the cadre of skilled and well-paid artisans and craftsmen these restorations would create.
- Creativity needed in identifying financial and other resources, e.g. collection of delinquent taxes, local bank consortium for low interest loans, federal & foundation grants. Explore how others have done it.



Concerns & Opportunities

- Serious of falling behind other islands in restoration, revitalization, reinvigoration.
- USVI must invest in retaining its unique flavor, charm and attractiveness or risk becoming a “stale”, outdated travel destination and investment opportunity.



Project Research Coordinator

Dr. Wanda Mills-Bocachica, AIA

Synthesis Development Consultants LLC



- **Research Methodology**
- **What Others Are Doing**



Research Methodology

1. Public Records Data – 2,741 properties in 3 Nat'l Historic Districts

- Property Descriptions
- Taxes: assessed value, taxes paid and taxes owed
- Ownership: private, nonprofit, government
- Zoning – residential, business, commercial, waterfront
- Use (single or multi-family, mixed use, institutional, business ,vacant, parking, etc.

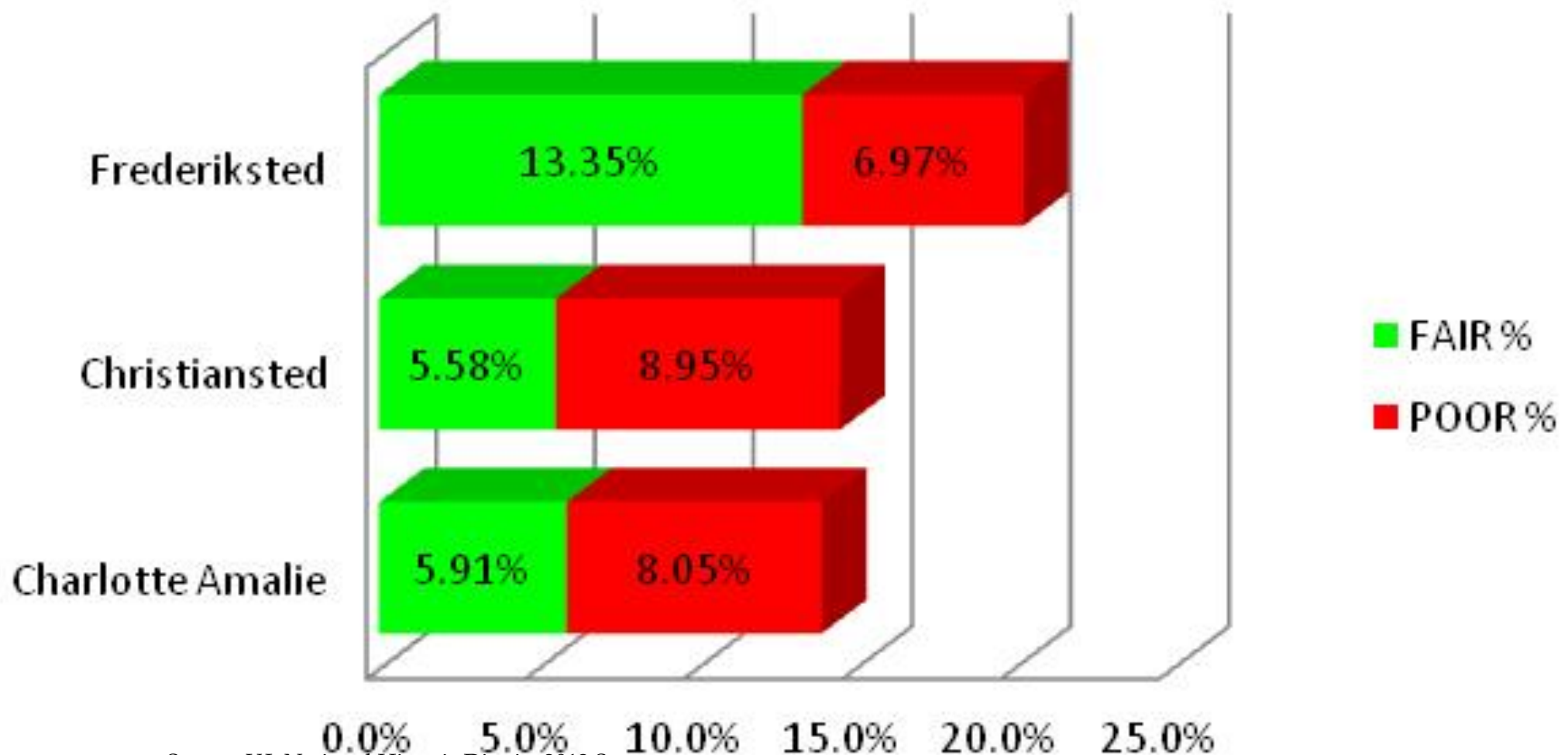
2. Field Survey

UVI survey team physically inspected, photographed and rated the condition of 451 historic properties.

Survey team: Vandell Percival, _____

Properties in Fair or Poor Condition: 423

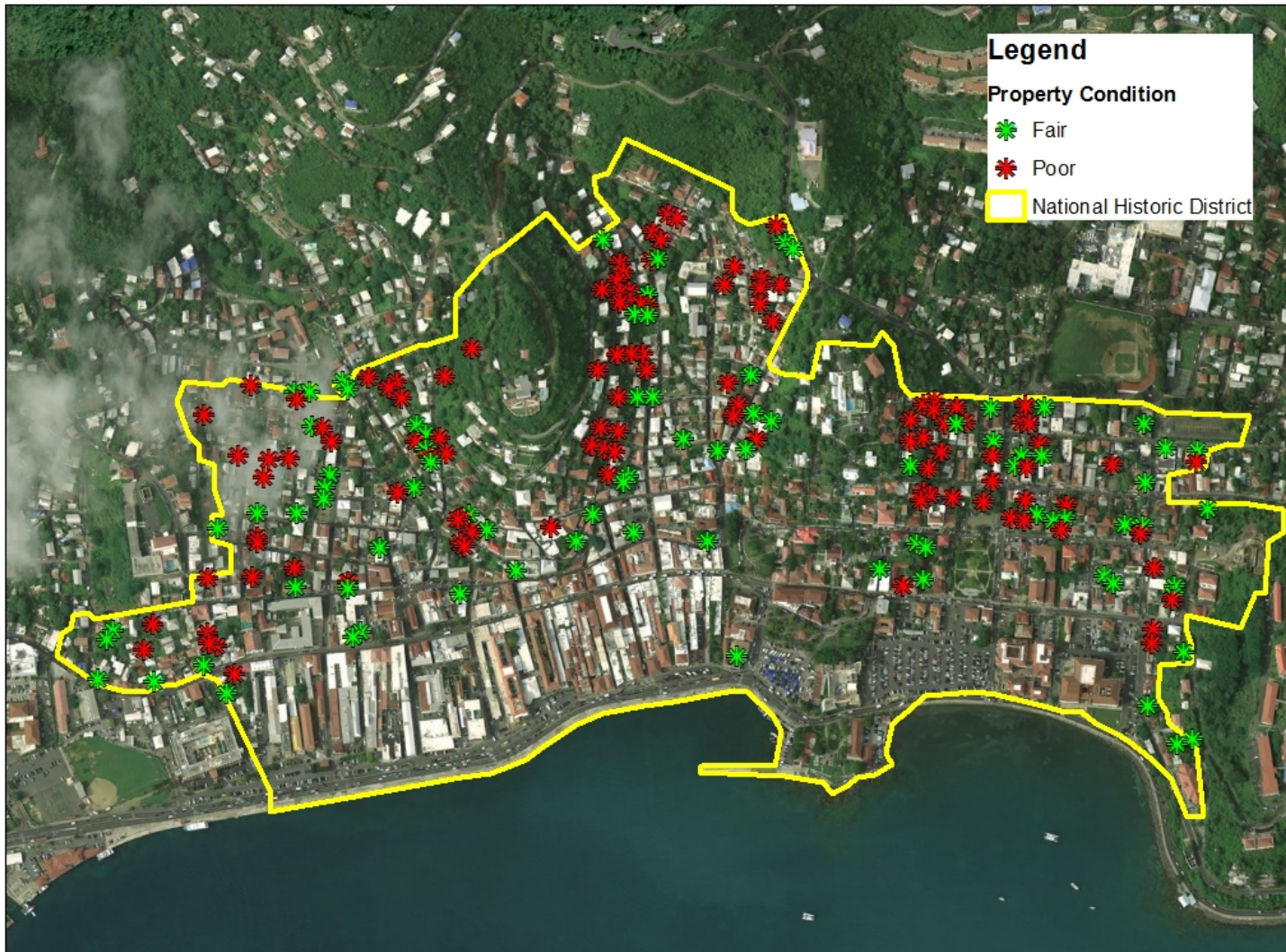
V.I. National Historic District 2012 Survey



Source: V.I. National Historic District 2012 Survey

CHARLOTTE AMALIE

(196 of 1404 lots in National Historic District)

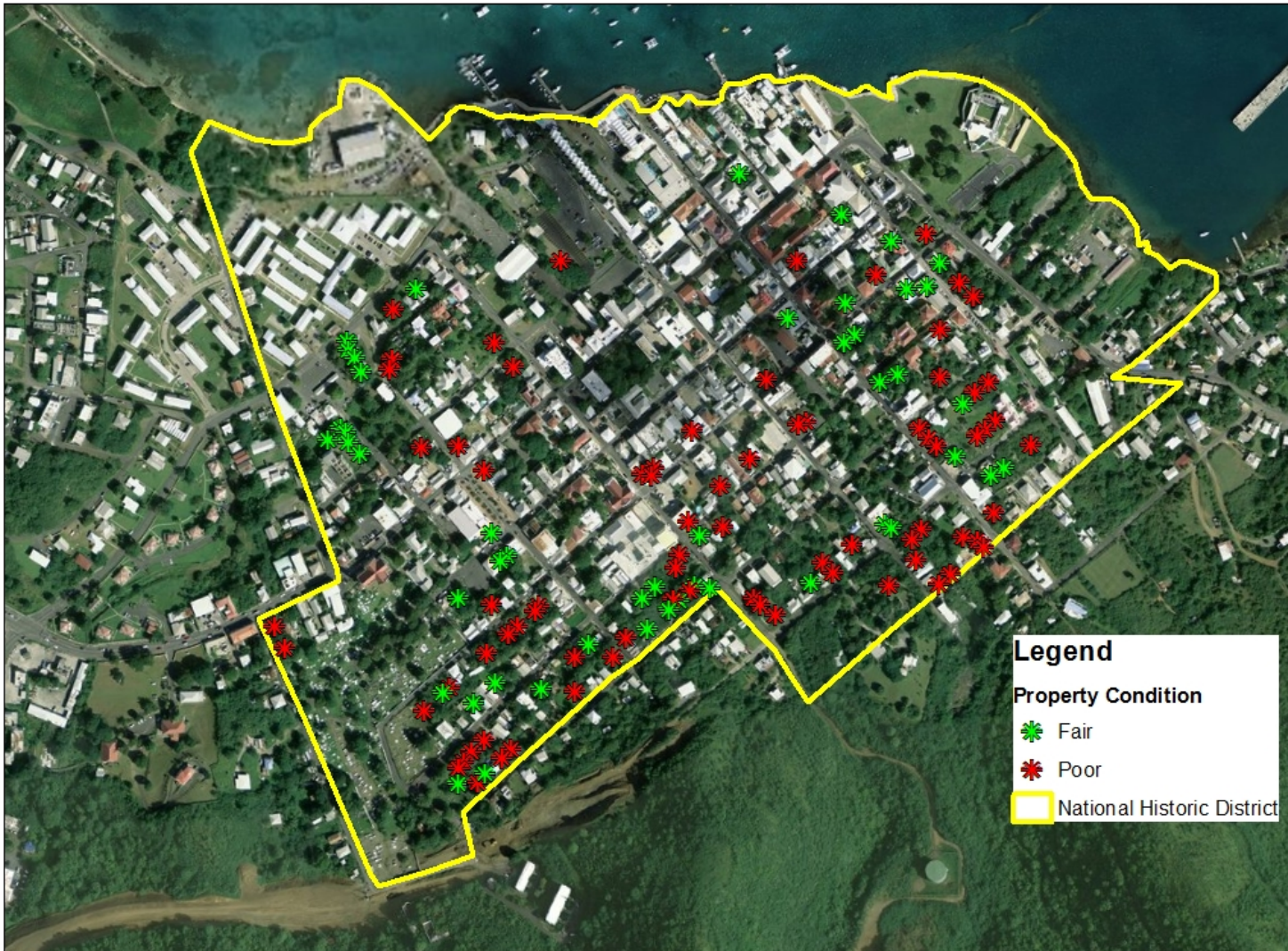


CONDITION	%
FAIR	5.91
POOR	8.05
TOTAL	13.96



CHRISTIANSTED

(125 of 860 lots in National Historic District)



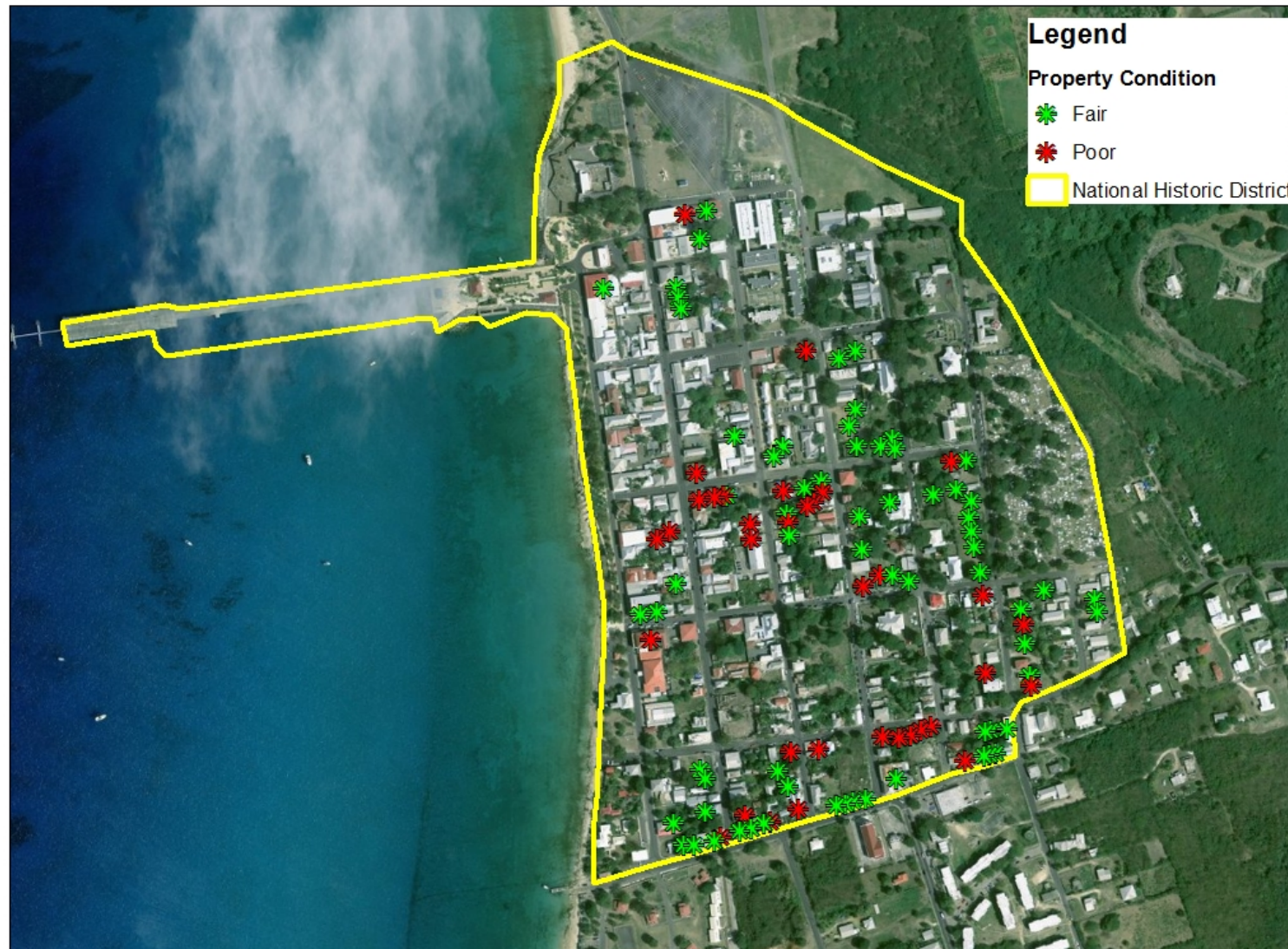
CONDITION	%
FAIR	5.58
POOR	8.95
TOTAL	14.53



16 Market St.

FREDERIKSTED

(102 of 502 lots in National Historic District)



CONDITION	%
FAIR	5.91
POOR	8.04
TOTAL	20.32

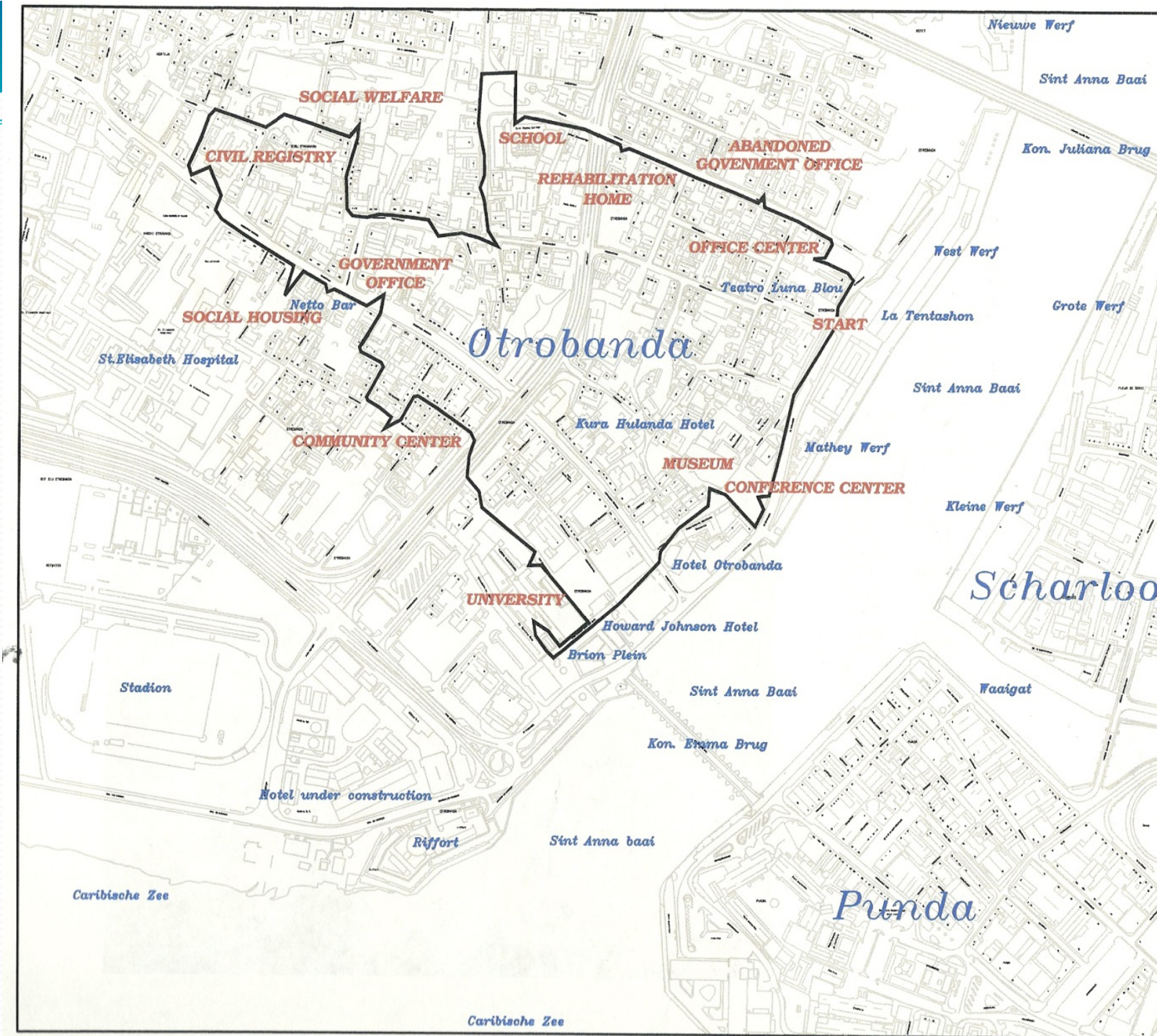


18A King St.

What others are doing



Otrabanda – Willemstad, Curacao



Land Use Map -- Willemstad Historic Districts



Hotel Kura Hulanda



KURA HULANDA MUSEUM

Hotel Kura Hulanda/African Heritage Museum/Conference Center

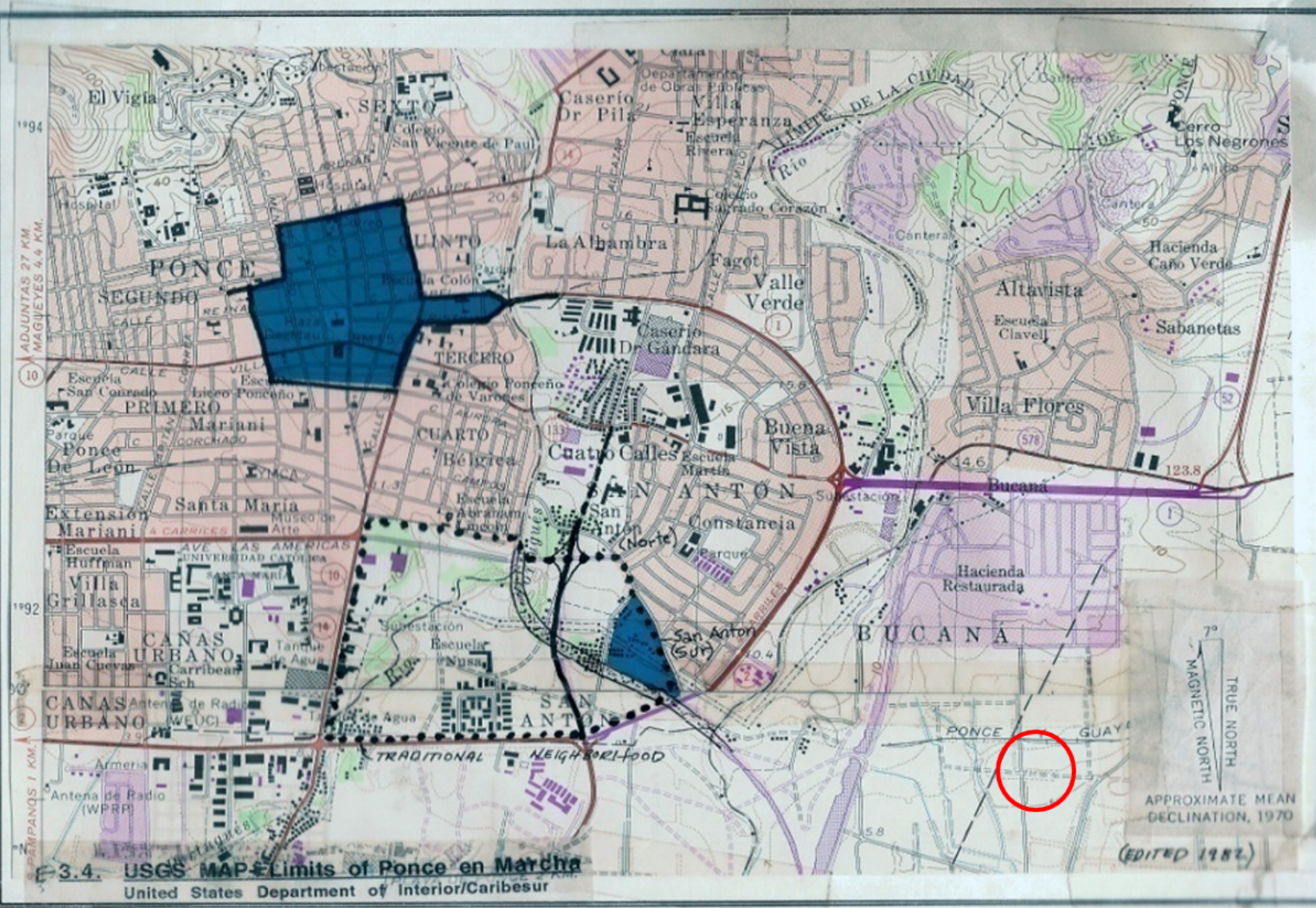
Otrabanda Willemstad, Curacao





Historic Architecture

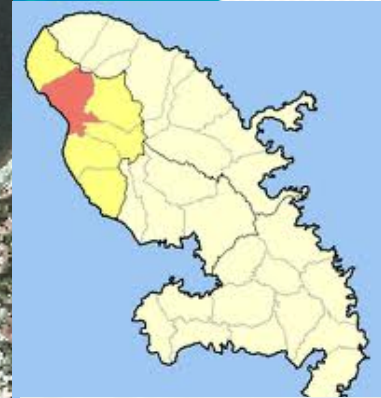
Ponce, Puerto Rico



Ponce Historic District Boundaries



Revitalization of el Barrio San Anton, Ponce, Puerto Rico



Saint-Pierre, Martinique



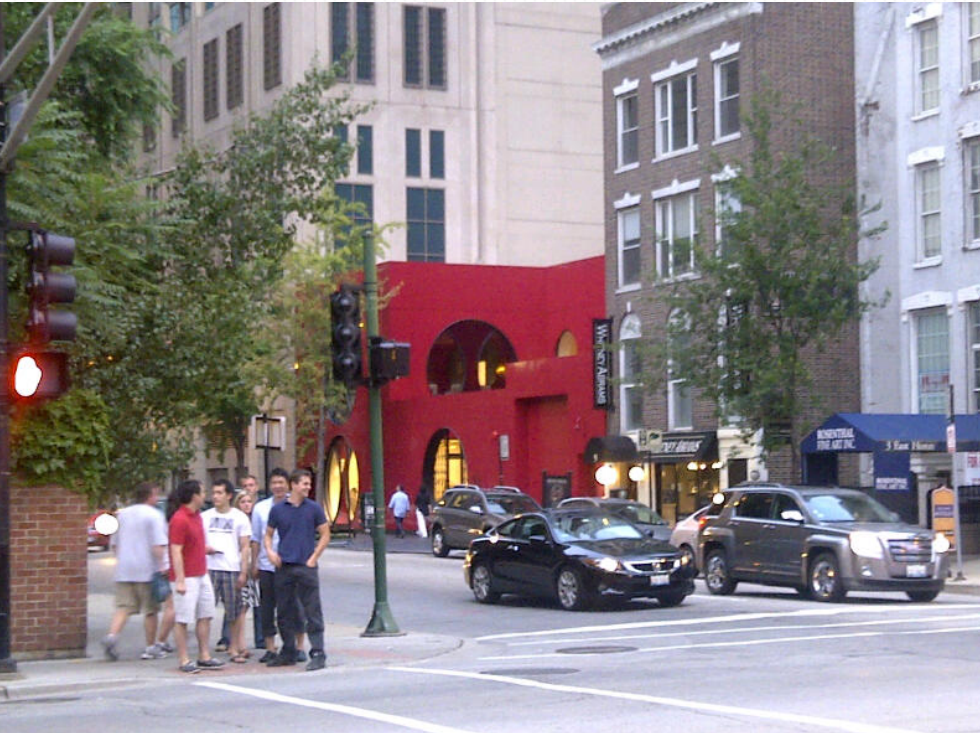
**International Young Architects Urban Design Charrette
Saint-Pierre, Martinique**

SENSE OF PLACE:

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS



Philadelphia Historic District



Chicago Historic District

**A Publication of the Preservation
Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
2007**

Supported by a grant from the William Penn
Foundation



**Development
Opportunities
through
Revitalizing
Our Historic Towns
&
Collective
Quality of Life**

**U.S. Virgin
Islands**

Savan Historic Cottage/Simulated Mural

**“Preserving our
Past...
Creating Our
Future”**



Preserve our historic neighborhoods