

## Christiansted Town Plan X (Circa: 2013)

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The historic town of Christiansted is in dire need of revitalization and dedicated attention to stimulate economic activity and development: restoring it as a cultural center for the island of St. Croix. This does not preclude the historic town of Frederiksted being provided a similar effort since both historic towns are, and have always been, centers of life and commerce on St. Croix. In order to define the parameters of a town planning effort, a Christiansted charette was held at St. Mary's Hall from March 18 to March 21, 2013. Many citizens participated and provided input on visioning for this town plan which has been incorporated into design solutions provided below. The intention of this town plan is to provide a framework for addressing many varied and diverse challenges facing the town and offer potential solutions to overcome them: repositioning Christiansted so it may, once again, become a viable, vibrant and bustling town.

As in any town planning effort, existing conditions must be analyzed and cataloged and solutions to correct any problems must be provided as action items. The following headers are the recurring thematic problems that have affected the economic growth of the town. In many cases, they are not unique problems to Christiansted, but are universal problems faced by other Caribbean towns and in other parts of the world. What is apparent is that the challenges facing the town of Christiansted are based on economies of scale: a small population, limited gross development products and fierce competition from similar tropical venues within the Caribbean. In order to reinvigorate the town, one has to look at external and internal factors that have caused it to become a depressed zone. Clearly, historic towns in the U.S. Virgin Islands are in need of assistance as evidenced by the VI Government creating enterprise zones in these locations to boost investment and bring vitality back to these important places.

Tourism in the U.S. Virgin Islands has always existed, but after the closing of Cuba as a Communist country in the 1950's, these islands have focused their economic development in tourism as a large revenue generating product. What has not been successfully achieved is leveraging our unique cultural resources and natural environment to define an authentic and specific identity in the Caribbean. This is not to say that a clear identity does not exist, its distinct attributes just have not been cataloged well and marketed as such. The need to compete against other similar venues seems to damper local efforts to develop these unique traits that would invariably distinguish our place from others. Strong historical links to the founding of the United States of America, our unique central location globally between the American and European/African continents, our well documented African Diaspora connections are only small themes that we could exploit specifically here in Christiansted.

From an African American perspective, the small scale population of the U.S. Virgin Islands combined with the substantial number of enslaved Africans that entered these ports for forced slave labor is an amazing Petri dish of how our African descendants have left an indelible mark on the history of this place under the most inhumane conditions. Many unique and superbly crafted vernacular residences that are so in jeopardy of being lost, are an amazing story of a small transference of wealth among a population not much appreciated and thought, in the distant past, not worthy of recording their history. This is clearly seen today in our historic towns by the numerous dilapidated wooden structures still in the possession, even with multiple owners, of native Virgin Islanders.

All examples provided above speak to the need to create a distinct cultural tourism product that can be used to attract a more sophisticated traveler looking to experience more than just sea and sand. Countless market studies indicate cultural heritage tourism is not only one of the fastest growing travel products in the industry but this specific cultural heritage traveler tends to spend substantially more than a regular tourist. Enhancing and promoting cultural heritage tourism in the USVI and specifically in both Frederiksted and Christiansted will help strengthen their unique identity and brand within the larger Caribbean travel experience.

The following emboldened headers are all defined components that will be used as catalysts to stimulate economic development in the town and achieve for its residents and St. Croix, a better quality of life.

### **I. Residential, Short Term, B&B and Hotel Development**

The biggest catalyst to re-energize and revitalize the historic town of Christiansted and enterprise zone is to re-introduce residential development within this town's footprint. The historic residential streets in

Christiansted such as upper sections of Queen Cross, King Cross, & Prince Streets in conjunction with Hill, East, New, Fisher & Lobster/Garden Streets are now devoid of many former vernacular residences. These neglected streets disconnect the town with its commercial district and are responsible for reducing the in-town population which is needed to support diverse businesses. At its height, Christiansted town proper was home to approximately 5000 residents and present day numbers are probably in the upper 2000 range. Therefore, a concerted effort to increase residential numbers in the town is an imperative goal.

Many issues such as individual and community policing of present societal ills would improve dramatically with increased residents within town limits. A 24 hour presence which is attained with more inhabitants would help address issues such as street safety day and night, littering, noise and loitering problems as well as spurring new businesses such as restaurants, groceries, home furnishings stores, art galleries, clothing stores, etc. In addition to concentrating on historically residential streets, the former town typology in the commercial district must also be restored. This means incentivizing commercial district property owners to restore & renovate apartment/residential units in the upper floors of their buildings. Creating Neighborhood and Business Watch programs on these streets and communities would also have a positive effect on quality of life.

Presently in the commercial district, there are hotels that are in need of updating. There are also a few open lots that would be prime for hotel development within the historic district and enterprise zone area in Christiansted. These hotels could have several amenities from water sports, to upscale restaurants, boutique shops without the need to use gimmicks such as casinos to attract guests. Due to their location in town, the availability of "things to do" will be numerous and engaging while encouraging visitors to experience our streetscapes, boardwalks and parks. Gambling spaces have an inverse focus with casino floors devoid of windows, natural lighting: disconnecting their interiors from the outside. A casino located in the "heart" of Christiansted would probably exacerbate crime issues such as robbery and theft of patrons.

The town can use as many hotel rooms as possible and can also benefit from the development of B&B and short term rental units in smaller structures specifically located on residential streets in Christiansted. The monetary return from creating short term and B&B rental units would be a strong catalyst to help property owners with dilapidated small wooden structures to have a viable business to pay for their restoration. Residential reconstruction is so vital that property owners wishing to restore these buildings for their own residences should also be incentivized. A near by success story that uses 100% tax credits for rehabilitation of both solely residential as well as commercial mixed use historic properties, is the World Heritage Site of Old San Juan, Puerto Rico. If traditional banking financing is not attainable for residential restoration, a VI Government Development Bank through the Economic Development Authority should be air marked to provide this type of financing.

Another residential development program that could be created in these areas would be an Artisan Live/Work Cooperative. Artisans could be encouraged to set up live/work spaces in these small restored/rehabilitated/renovated vernacular buildings to make their wares and have these spaces open for the sale of their products. These individuals would provide 24 hour activity in many of these presently abandoned streets and would dramatically improve the quality of life in these areas. In addition, they would provide unique and authentic local products to be sold to locals and visitors alike.

In established commercial zones such a Estate Welcome which have many businesses with ample parking, these strictly commercial structures should have incentives to create residential units in the upper floors of these buildings. An allocation of 25% of these upper floors could be dedicated to creating apartments/executive suites, short term and B&B rental units which would ensure these areas have a 24 hour presence that would improve late night safety.

Since there are ample parking areas here, property owners could be incentivized to open night time and after hour lounges, even live music venues since there would be limited residents who probably would not mind having these venues available so close to them. With proper security and video surveillance, this area could encourage citizens from the entire enterprise zone and neighboring areas to patronize these night time establishments.

## **II. Commercial Development**

Commercial development within the town's enterprise zone requires more partnerships between

the local Government, the private sector and non-government organizations (NGOs). As stated before, the re-introduction of more residential housing units is a key component in creating a healthy commercial district in Christiansted. More inhabitants require more amenities to be introduced in the town. These can be defined as more cultural restaurants specializing in local cuisine or local cuisine fused with other cultural cuisines. More lounges with libation, music and high quality sound proofing, should be encouraged to increase after hour use of the town.

More local music venues should be allowed with strict adherence to the Noise Pollution law. As technology improves, musicians and their venues should understand that amplifiers produce much higher decibel levels than years past and that in tight confines of closely located buildings in town, sound reverberates exponentially. Sound tests and noise levels should be part of setting up a performance in a non-enclosed or even enclosed venue. Getting feedback from neighbors to ensure that their sound levels are not being a nuisance should be the standard, not an exception. Balancing these points will allow more activity that encourages patrons to frequent these types of businesses while preserving the quality of life of its residents. This issue is most critical if we are promoting more hotels, short term and B&B's rentals within the town's enterprise zone. Having dissatisfied visitors who are unable to experience some level of solace and quiet in these facilities is not an option.

More small scale boutique hotels, short term and B&B rental units should be introduced in this area. More museums highlighting VI culture should be promoted such as decorative arts, clothing, art, architecture, music, culinary arts, luminaries and historical heroes, language and dialect, etc. Also, an artisan cooperative museum and store can be created to promote the work made by these individuals. One of the most suitable venues for this type of museum and market space would be the dilapidated Richmond Prison designed by Danish West Indies architect Albert Lovmand. This stunning historic structure is in dire need of restoration and rehabilitation and would be an ideal adaptive reuse project for this purpose. Its unique internal vaulted corridor and small jail cells could house artisan wares for sale to patrons. The enclosed open courtyard could also house many additional open aired vendors. The location of the prison structure is in walking distance to the west side beach area where a new hotel and water park can be located. This facility would be an added amenity in the area that would encourage pedestrian traffic to the nearby extended boardwalk.

Craftsman live/work residences should also be encouraged and could be subsidized by the VI Government if needed. These businesses such as fabricators of historic wood shutters, metal hinges, jalousie louvered windows & doors, casement windows and doors, gingerbread fret work, lime wash paint & lime mortar, in addition to master carpenters and furniture turners are a portion of the trades needed in the town. These same trade businesses can create a trade school for the youth to attain these lucrative skills for future entrepreneurial ventures. Promoting these trades will help reduce costs for authentic rehabilitation work by increasing the availability of these products and services.

### **III. Historic Preservation & Public Education**

By incorporating an adjudicatory process in the existing local Historic Preservation laws, the VI Government and VI Historic Preservation Commission could ensure proper development practices and reduce violations in the historic district. Enforcement of historic preservation standards defined by the U.S. Department of Interior briefs should always be required. General public education should be done on a regular basis with workshops provided describing what can and cannot be done in the historic district. School curricula should highlight and teach VI History and its rich cultural and architectural past, encouraging and molding future preservationists. The goal is to retain and preserve our cultural resources so that they can become an economic engine for both businesses and residents. The more authentic and well preserved the town is, the more it will remain a true commerce center for the island.

Community support of the National Park Service's effort to create a slavery museum in the existing old Post Office Building should be a priority since the Wharf Area was the initial entry port for approximately 25,000 enslaved Africans that were brought, against their will, to these shores. The boardwalk area to the east of Fort Christiansvaern would be an ideal mooring location for a replica of the Fredensborg Slave Ship that could be another interpretative and interactive museum at this site.

Cataloging the persons that owned, made and constructed these special places should be pursued by the VI Government and NGO's that specialize in researching past histories of places such as Christiansted. Present efforts by the National Park Service to bring alive the Free Gut, Gallows Bay historical areas by researching and telling the stories of who lived, worked, built and died in these places are the

template to expand these scholarly pursuits. VI Society of Historians and St. Croix Landmarks Society are existing NOGs that can also play an instrumental part in this task.

The resulting fruit from these efforts will be walking tours, small family interactive museums, artisan live/work residences, short term/B&B rental units, cultural restaurants and themed businesses that are specific to this town and island. These are all potential new businesses that can benefit residents and help spur the local economy. Once in place, these businesses and the revitalized town can be well marketed to the world to attract visitors and help continue to generate revenues.

By preserving this historic town and providing architectural control standards such as Form Based Codes for the entire Christiansted Enterprise Zone (CEZ), we can ensure the town's true authentic character can be retained. Efforts such as making this town a World Heritage Site could be attained and would provide another funding layer and would compliment making St. Croix a federally designated National Heritage Area.

The general populace must buy into the notion that historic preservation is an economic development engine. There should be no rub with saving a building or place to spur economic development. Most travelers visiting any place in the world gravitate to historic centers to glean what a place and a people are about. Historic preservation is at the core of sustainability since construction and demolition debris constitutes over 64% of material deposited in landfills. With limited island resources, recycling a building has a much larger societal benefit than recycling cans, plastic and other household waste. More specifically, by preserving these historical gems, we are preserving the stories of those individuals that lived here, who shaped and made this distinct town a unique place. To quote a relevant tag line from the past TV show Inside, "Once lost, it's lost forever".

#### **IV. Enhancing and Improving Existing Infrastructure**

Many town infrastructure improvements and enhancements are needed in the town. Many existing water and sewage lines are aged, non-functioning and are repaired only when antiquated buried lines become damaged. A comprehensive analysis of the age of these systems and a targeted repair plan should be enacted. Without proper sewage and potable water systems working within the CEZ, property owners will be discouraged to invest in renovating and updating their structures. Presently, many water lines produce rust tainted water and sewage back ups occur regularly in both commercial and residential areas. Pot holes and overpaying the roads in the historic district have caused flooding in properties. Clogged gutters and debris filled guts also exacerbate these conditions in the town. A comprehensive plan to address these deferred maintenance issues with strict enforcement of local and federal development laws will ensure property owners that their buildings will not be devalued by poorly maintained public infrastructure.

Concentrating on vital infrastructure maintenance can have immediate benefits to the town. The Wharf bulkhead and existing boardwalk both need immediate repairs and enhancements to help revitalize the town. This pedestrian and commercial waterfront corridor is the life blood of the town and should be treated as a valuable economic asset. The boardwalk has an unbuilt Phase II which entails creating a boardwalk from the eastern side of Fort Christiansvaern to Gallows Bay. This should be a priority for the VI Government to execute. Having the boardwalk extend into Christiansted Harbor and wrap around Fort Christiansvaern should also be considered. A new boardwalk extending from the west side of Seaborne Airlines terminal up to the beach abutting the Richmond Power Plant should be developed by the VI Government. This would help spur new developments on the western edge of Christiansted and allow for the abandoned housing community that exists there to be redeveloped.

This large tract of sandy beach and green space would be prime for hotel development, apartment complexes and time shares and even a convention center. If the Richmond power plant can not be moved, there is a need for a buffer zone between the hotel development and this facility. Creating a water park with an aquarium component and an adjacent cultural village would be an ideal buffer. Smaller water sport businesses, local beach shack restaurants and some live local music venues in conjunction with a hotel & resort would be the end anchor to the western expansion of the boardwalk.

Due to storms and high traffic wear and tear, the boardwalk design should be re-evaluated and different materials should be considered. With the advent of light weight concrete products, pre-cast concrete slabs could be created with proper drainage systems that could be placed on the existing

reinforced pilings. A curb edge could be designed facing the water: creating a bulkhead edge to the boardwalk. LED lighting systems contained within this curb could provide adequate illumination on the boardwalk while meeting Turtle lighting mitigation. This system if well engineered and properly designed could be tilted up during heavy wave action storms to prevent damage to the boardwalk and reduce over all life span costs.

Illegal sewage dumping by boats in Christiansted Harbor is another local enforcement problem that could result in new businesses in the town. A boat to boat service to remove sewage waste could be created to ensure no solid waste is dumped into the water by these moored vessels. This would help water quality in the harbor and help promote more hotel development and water sports to occur within its limits.

Introducing more public restroom facilities would be a welcomed infrastructure improvement to the town. These facilities which could also have showering compartments incorporated into them, could be money making ventures for individuals willing to run and maintain them. A fee for their use and VI Government subsidies could make them very viable business ventures while provided a much needed public service to the town.

The upkeep of our in town parks and green areas are essential to encourage residents to experience outdoor spaces, interact with each other and promote walking, exercise and other outdoor activities. The National Park Service is engaging the town and island residents with sunset jazz events, outdoor movie nights in the park, emancipation commemorations, etc., which should continue and expand since they have increased the use of this green space. Limpicht park in downtown Christiansted needs some TLC to restore its historic masonry perimeter wall and upkeep its grounds. This underutilized urban outdoor space is well suited for kids events, artisan outdoor vending and picnics/lunches. The western edge of Christiansted has a wonderful undeveloped park site with a great sandy beach which could be enhanced as described previously. The area is large enough to have some sport facilities incorporated in its design such as a basketball and tennis courts. Exercise and bike trails could also be added to this area.

Properly maintaining our cemeteries is another infrastructure need that should be pursued. Our cemeteries have interred a diverse citizenry that date back to the founding of Christiansted making them another potential tourism attraction. Connecting with overseas descendants of the interred would generate additional visitors wanting to reconnect with their past. African, American & European individuals with ancestors in our cemeteries would have another cultural tourism experience when they visit our shores. In order to promote this type of tourism, we must maintain our cemetery facilities as serene well groomed spaces for reflection and contemplation. Christiansted's cemeteries could easily be enhanced for these purposes and would help remove the seedy interactions that now occur within their walls. Feeling safe in our cemeteries would also translate to feeling safe in our town: a healthy well cared for cemetery would symbolize a healthy well cared for town.

#### **V. Parking and Parking lots**

Parking issues remain an important problem within the CEZ and specifically within the historic district. On street parking should continue with the advent of timed parking with parking fees and should be instituted in the commercial areas of the CEZ. New and renovated residential areas in the CEZ should allow resident parking using identification stickers which could be obtained on a yearly basis. The bulk of employee parking and long term CEZ visitor parking should be housed in elevated car garages. (3 - 4) strategic locations are specified on opposite ends of town and 2 central locations. Smaller on ground private parking lots should also be defined within the CEZ. These would be privately owned and could be money generating enterprises.

In order to fund parking enforcement personnel, In-Vehicle Parking Meters (IVPM) could be instituted to be used on dedicated streets. These pre-paid devices which would be visibly shown in each car, would give drivers ease and flexibility to comply with parking requirements in town.

#### **VI. Sedimentation and Erosion Control Issues**

Present development has overlaid and damaged fully functioning culverts that exist underneath the town of Christiansted. Over paving roads, over laying concrete on stone and brick gutters and swales, and constricting water flow into historic culverts have resulted in major erosion and flooding problems in the town. Many historic buildings which never flooded in the past, now flood during continuous heavy rain and storm events. VI. Historic Preservation Commission policy is to mill existing asphalt streets in the historic district to original levels prior to over laying any new asphalt. This VI Government violation exacerbates the

flooding problem and actually covers up many historic features in our towns which are protected by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the VI Antiquities Law of 1999. Property owners in the Christiansted Historic District should demand this rule of law be followed as it relates to paving in the town to ensure their properties will not be adversely affected.

In addition, creating more greenbelts and retention ponds throughout the town could create more usable park like settings and help alleviate runoff during heavy rain and storm events. Stocking these ponds and filling them with anti-insect and mosquito eating fish and fauna would ameliorate any health problems these bodies of water could create for residents. The result from creating these water catchments would be an improved marine environment and water quality by reducing run off and turbidity. These systems could be created in the upper plains and hills of the town abutting the Christiansted By Pass. These functional and beautification greenbelts would encourage more usage of the By Pass by pedestrians not only as over looks to the town, but as outdoor exercise venues such as jogging, bicycle and walking trails.

These greenbelt areas would provide new town residents with substantial out door spaces for improved and healthy living while adding spectacular vantage points of the town and Caribbean Sea. In addition, community gardens could also be encouraged in these greenbelt areas which would foster more community engagement and better relationships between residents. Allowing some ancillary businesses in these greenbelts would ensure their sustainability and help with their up keep. Health and organic food stores, juicing stands, vegan/vegetarian food courts, nurseries with indigenous and native plants and fruits, yoga and training centers with equipment, clothing and supplements sales could be spread throughout this area: creating a eco/cultural tourism product in Christiansted.

## **VII. Public Safety, Code Enforcement, Loitering, Littering & Noise Pollution**

Police presence within the CEZ is not sufficient. Robberies, murders, prostitution, illegal drug transactions, petty thefts, copper wire and aluminum metal window thefts, littering, illegal parking, noise pollution, vandalism and loitering are only a few of the daily criminal activities that the Police Department needs to address. An updated digital video camera system is needed within the CEZ. A 24/7 operating system used by the Police Department would immediately curb the volume of crime in the town and make residents and visitors feel more safe. If the cost of such a system is out of reach for the local government, then a private sector system of cameras should be pursued. Each business, resident and property owner can outfit their structures with surveillance cameras facing the public streets and hook them up to a privately monitoring organization and/or streamed on line and recorded 24/7. These video cameras with night vision capability would record (both visually and audibly) any infractions or illegal acts occurring in the town area and could be made available to the Police Department for apprehension, enforcement and prosecution. This private video surveillance system could also capture incidents in rear yards, if so desired, by commercial and residential citizens and could be incorporated into Neighborhood and Commercial Watch programs. School educational curricula should incorporate the societal do's and don'ts such as littering, environment and noise pollution, illegal acts in conjunction with V.I. History classes to foster a new generation of socially and culturally conscious citizens.

The Water and Power Authority is responsible for all street lighting in the CEZ. Many street lights are not functioning and the quality of light they cast do not allow clear visibility at night. The agency has met with the St. Croix Historic Preservation Committee to get approval to install historically appropriate lighting along town streets. With advances in LED lighting and true rendering light fixtures, WAPA will address this imperative safety concern in Christiansted sometime in the future. However, the VI Government can be slow in delivering these needed services to the public. Although we face an energy crisis and ever increasing kilowatt/hour costs, a Neighborhood and Business Watch program can solicit help from property owners, businesses and residents to provide good lighting on their buildings, under arcades and in courtyards to help properly illuminate our streets. Using more energy efficient bulbs, citizens can help achieve these goals without large increases to their power bills.

Monies obtained from violations occurring within the CEZ should be held in a dedicated VI Government account, not in the General Fund, for Christiansted town. Parking Fees, littering violations, noise pollution violations, parking violations, historic preservation violations, mooring fees, etc. are a small number of code enforcement fees that could generate funding to provide improved services in the town. This special account could be earmarked and distributed to respective VI Government agencies that enforce each code requirement or fee required to operate in the town. This revenue source would help

fund these public service operations.

### **VIII. Homeless, Addicted, Self-medicating and Indigent Housing**

Public, private and NGO partnerships are needed to address the CEZ's homeless, addicted, self-medicating and indigent problems. Food and lodging are imperative needs for these individuals and are a high priority in this town planning effort. Present organizations such as Catholic Charities, Light House Mission, the Village/Westcare, Charles Harwood Hospital St. Croix Drug Rehabilitation Unit are not enough to meet the present demand. Identifying a key location within the town's enterprise zone limits to meet this large demand is paramount for the town planning effort to succeed. Short term facilities need to be identified within the town to house more of these services. Present facilities are in need of expansion and an example of creating the synergy between a restoration/renovation project and meeting a dire community service can be seen at the Light House Mission working to restore the Dudley Building in Sunday Market Square. The long term goal would be to create a center for these individuals that presently reside on the streets in town. The best convalescent home that could be revitalized and rehabilitated would be the old Christiansted Hospital.

Since this is a local V.I. Registry Historic Place and can be placed on the National Registry of Historic Places, the Old Christiansted Hospital should retain some public uses especially for tours since it is an integral part of town history. This facility could be restored and treated in a dynamic way to allow the rehabilitation of these troubled individuals while allowing the general public to visit the compound and engage patients in a controlled environment. By allowing some supervised visitations with the public, part of the rehabilitation process would be to help visitors and patients see each other as a person rather than as a faceless indigent. School community service hour requirements could be garnered at this facility. Other school programs could be located here such as computer centers, day care or after school tutoring. Patients at the facility who have children could have their children attend programs there allowing them to continue their parental relationships during their convalescence.

### **IX. Contemporary Architecture as a compliment to Historic Preservation**

There are many examples of contemporary infills that have occurred in the National Historic District of Christiansted. Some examples are successful, and in many instances, they are highly unsuccessful. During the 1950's and 1960's, both Urban Renewal and many new concrete buildings influenced from Puerto Rico caused many historic gems to be lost and replaced by what have become our own Mid-Century Modern buildings. These structures are now historic by definition and are also protected.

Any living town must evolve, grow and change. However, a sophisticated and savvy community with the cultural assets found in Christiansted would ensure proper preservation of these historic structures both large and small. In lots with remaining historic ruins, every effort should be made to research the structures that existed there. These structures should be replicated to restore the continuity of the streetscape. In instances where there is no documentation of what existed on lots with ruins, historically appropriate designs should be executed reusing the ruins. On lots with no documentation and no ruins, the opportunity to create a modern day edifice could be pursued but only with strict conditions.

In order to ensure proper design aesthetics are achieved, there must be strict adherence to architectural controls which should only be executed by qualified professionals: licensed Virgin Islands Architects. These professionals would provide proper studies of the characteristics, details, massing, sizing and contextualism of structures and open spaces using a modern vocabulary derived from existing historic precedents. The allowance of non architectural professionals such as draftsmen and engineers to do this type of work in architectural control districts should be strictly prohibited and is not allowed by Federal Department of Interior requirements. Form based codes or Design Assessment Report(s) (DAR) that contain typology studies, town characteristics and architectural aesthetics should be required from any professional working within the historic district and possibly the entire enterprise zone. Creating new architecture with structures and spaces that are sympathetic to the existing historic buildings in Christiansted is the foremost standard needed to help revitalize the town while ensuring the cultural resources remain authentic and intact.

As stated above, the biggest hindrance to achieving well executed modern infill on empty historic lots, is the allowance of non-professionals to do this type of work based on our Virgin Islands Code. The repeal of the following Virgin Islands Code is needed to ensure both contemporary and historic preservation design work

is only done by qualified licensed architects. The following exemption is provided which outlines a conflict in our enacted strict building codes: International Building Codes 2012Ed, International Energy Conservation Code 2012 Ed., etc. These numerous draftsmen have not obtained a professional design degree, have not taken a representative stringent design exam, and are not required to obtain continuing education credits. They also do not and, in many cases cannot obtain liability insurance. Therefore, these individuals should not be allowed to practice as "architects" in the CEZ.

TITLE TWENTY-SEVEN Professions and Occupations  
Chapter 8.Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors  
27 V.I.C. § 291 (2013)

**§ 291. Exemptions; temporary permits**

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to curtail or extend the rights of any other legally recognized profession or craft. This chapter may not be construed to prevent or curtail-

(8)The making by a draftsman of plans or specifications for the incidental or occasional erection or construction of any building or enlargement or alteration thereof unless the same adversely affects the public safety or health or the property of some other person.

**X. Economic Development Funding Strategies**

Brownsfield Funding: Due to the age of Christiansted and its buildings, many historic structures may have asbestos and lead paint contamination which must be abated prior to commencing renovation and rehabilitation work. With such a potentially high number of contaminated historic buildings, Christiansted can be designated through the VI Government as a Brownsfield site. The Federal Agency that has several grant programs from assessment to clean up, is the Department of Environmental Protection. With a fully functioning program in place, grant monies could be distributed to do this needed clean up prior to commencing any renovation work. Especially in cases where these structures will be used as B&B's and short term rentals, this abatement needs to be done to ensure the life safety of visitors/renters and owner's alike.

National Heritage Area (NHA) Designation and Funding: St. Croix has embarked in the process of achieving this designation. We are well on our way to creating St. Croix as a NHA which will create approximately 1 million dollars in funding to develop authentic cultural tourism products to promote this designation. We will be on the NHA directory and marketed locally and nationally as such. In anticipation of the increased volume of tourists that visit these designated areas, we must be ready to provide the services required to make our national heritage area a success. Many components outlined in the town planning proposal will prepare us to making Christiansted a premiere destination on the NHA list.

World Heritage Designation and Funding: World Heritage Site status has been a powerful catalyst for socio-economic change in some places—the result of highly site-specific interventions that share some common characteristics. At present, Salt River has been on a path for this designation and due to some short sited lack of enforcement by the local government, the site must be revisited and infractions corrected before it can continue to be considered for this classification. Christiansted potentially with proper stewardship, restoration and conservation, could be groomed for this designation. Placing more historic buildings on the National Registry of Historic Places, achieving the National Heritage Area designation, partnering with other countries from Denmark and Africa to conserve and restore our cultural resources, will aid in soliciting the WHS status. Achieving this status would tie directly to branding and fostering a clear cultural identity for Christiansted, St. Croix and the U.S. Virgin Islands as a whole.

Private Foundation Funding: Private foundations are valuable funding sources for community development. Typically, identifying a foundation's mission that aligns with a community development project is the first step to pursuing this funding source. Private foundations in countries like Denmark have been interested in funding projects in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Stumbling blocks to receiving funds have been the inability of the VI Government to match grants, not meeting "authentic" restoration or conservation standards on a project or not properly identifying high impact community development projects. Many components of this town planning effort can be leveraged to show these organizations that the VI Government, private sector, NGOs and local stakeholders are coalescing to revitalize their historic town and community.

Several national companies located in the Territory have non-profit foundations within their corporate structure which help fund community improvement projects. Funding requests for well defined community programs should be sought from these corporate businesses.

Department of Agriculture: The U.S. Department of Agriculture has several loan and grant programs to help rural areas develop their communities and economies. Housing Assistance, Rural Development Loan Assistance, Business Development, Community Facilities and Utility Services are all categories that

could be applied for to aid the Christiansted town planning strategies. As with all Federal assistance programs, grant writers and community leaders with supporting staff are needed to invest dedicated time to attain these competitive grants. Forging partnerships with the VI Government, private sector and NGOs to pursue these funding sources can be leveraged to attain defined town planning goals.

**HUD Funding:** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has several rotating grant programs that appear applicable to the efforts the town of Christiansted are undertaking to revitalize this community. The EDA/Enterprise Zone town planning charette and offshoots such as the formation of the Christiansted Community Alliance are components needed to apply for the following grant programs:

FY2013 HOPE VI Main Street Grant Program NOFA FY 2013 Capacity Building for Sustainable Communities FY2013 Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant Program FY 2013 Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant Program

Typically, these highly intensive application driven programs need commitment by grant writers and community and civic leaders to pursue these funding sources. With proper community support and engagement of local agencies, Christiansted could benefit from access to these monies.

## **XI. Development Anchors**

**College Town:** The University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) VI Caribbean Cultured Center (VICCC) should be located in the Old Barracks Building in Christiansted. A VI Caribbean Culture Center with its mandate should be housed in a historic district such as Christiansted. A museum, classrooms, offices, meeting hall, preservation labs can all be located in this complex and become a true cultural academic institution within this town. A UVI Architectural School with a specialization in Caribbean and Historic Preservation/Conservation Architecture, as well as Building Arts can also be created. Charleston, South Carolina has the only U.S American College of Building Arts which continues to be highly successful educating individuals in traditional and historic construction trades. The ancillary services related to locating this establishment in the town would be numerous such as living quarters, dormitories, apartments, restaurants, book stores, computer and internet cafes, copying centers, laundries, groceries and convenience stores, etc. Adding a “college town” component to Christiansted would be an immediate economic catalyst. Introducing a younger populace seeking higher education would have other benefits such as more cultural awareness and a new crop of preservationists to move the cause forward.

**Sunday Market Square:** Since its founding in 1734, Christiansted has been a preplanned town with a unique space known as Sunday Market Square (SMS). Throughout its existence, SMS has been a bustling center of activity where our enslaved Africans were allowed, on Sunday, to sell any extra produce. Some of these individuals, through much discipline and ability, were able to buy their freedom creating a vibrant mercantile center for enslaved and freed coloreds. These stories of perseverance define the importance of this unique square.

In the 70's & 80's, SMS declined and many businesses left the square allowing more seedy and illicit activity to overtake the space. Many large structures facing the square were abandoned by their owners and helped the further decline of the area. St. Croix Foundation acquired several buildings in the square in 1989 from the bankrupt Community Development Corporation and has spent the past 20 years restoring and reviving the square. The Department of Public Works restored the public square around 2006. To date, the larger buildings in the square remain dilapidated and in need of restoration and rehabilitation. There are signs that this trend is changing with the painting of the Dudley Building. St. Croix Foundation owns the old Alexander Theater and has begun the process of studying the space to be renovated as a civic center for the town. The theater space could house 400 patrons for varied events such as performing arts, plays, concerts, lectures and community town hall meetings. At present, there is no facility of this scale that exists in the town or neighboring areas. Existing non-profit groups such as the Caribbean Community Theatre would benefit from partnering with this state of the art facility. Restoring the old Alexander Theater could be a catalyst to develop the remaining (3) large abandoned historic structures facing the square. They could be converted into mixed usage commercial/residential developments. Spurring economic development at the beginning of town would ensure a positive perception when one first enters the town and would help remove many existing seedy and illicit activities in the square in addition to back streets and the nearby cemetery.

**(3 – 4) Elevated Parking Garages:** Each parking garage will hold different quantities of cars. The largest proposed parking garage will have 3 enclosed floors and an open 4th floor roof parking deck and will be developed on the VI Government parking lot. This parking garage capacity will be in the range of 450 cars. The design of this elevated garage would be lined with articulated facades that evoke the architectural aesthetics of Christiansted. A shallow row of retail spaces will face King Cross and Strand Street and will have 2 levels of residential apartments located above. The mixed usage of the parking garage with retail and residential units will ensure 24/7 use of this facility and will help ensure it remains a safe and secure

structure within the town.

An elevated garage is contemplated near the western side of the Seaborne Airplane hanger. This elevated garage would be key to absorb increased parking demands of a hotel development slated on the beach parcel adjacent to the seaplane terminal. The capacity would be in the range of 300 cars. The architectural aesthetics of this garage could be more contemporary and would have retail spaces incorporated on the ground level.

An elevated garage is also contemplated at the entrance to town in Bassin Triangle on the open space that presently has an abandoned gas station. The capacity of this garage would be in the range of 200 cars and would provide a parking facility adjacent to the old Senate Building that will be redeveloped into a supermarket and retail spaces. The garage will also have some retail spaces on the ground level. Contentment road is presently a mixed usage street that could have additional commercial spaces developed helping connect a new residential complex to be located at the end of the street intersecting with the By Pass. Ideally, employees working in businesses in the area could use this facility to park, reducing long term parking in downtown and increase customer parking. The architectural aesthetics of this facility would also be contemporary: faced with vertical vegetation to soften the look of this structure at the entrance to town.

The final elevated garage will be connected to the new ferry dock located on the eastern side of Christiansted on a 6 acre VI Government parcel. This facility can hold 200 cars and will need an additional ingress/egress road which could be connected to Lobster Street. This facility will also have some ground floor retail spaces and will be designed with Christiansted architectural aesthetics. This parking garage will allow employees working in the downtown commercial district to do long term parking during the day.

All (4) parking garages will be financed in the development packages of new hotels, ferry dock and supermarket/retail spaces. All parking garages will be managed and maintained by these respective development groups.

Additional Port Dock in Gallows Bay: The new adjacent ferry dock will allow the existing commercial dock to continue on the opposite side of Gallows Bay. The commercial facility will need enhancement to make it more visually appealing and sympathetic to neighboring structures. The resulting protected Gallows Bay Harbor would be ideal for a small scale marina that would spur related marine businesses that would enhance and compliment St. Croix Marina.

The new ferry dock will allow inter-island passengers to be deposited into Christiansted town proper. This will be a mid point location that allows visitors to traverse the historic town, walk on the boardwalk in either direction to varying commercial anchors along the way.

By aesthetically enhancing the commercial facility, it will allow the docking of larger high end cruise ships giving passengers a beautified walk leading them towards the historic commercial district or towards businesses in Estate Welcome. Small dock to dock ferry services could be created to move these same passengers, visitors and residents to the eastern side of Christiansted, Protestant Cay or to the new hotel development and water park. These services are potential new businesses that could be created in the CEZ.

Protestant Cay Development: The center piece of any Christiansted town plan is enhancing and further developing Protestant Cay. Although outside the CEZ, this unique island in the harbor has the potential to become a 5 star hotel/spa development and convention center. Using an eco-cultural tourism theme, this hotel could increase its room count by expanding vertically on its existing footprint. There is substantial documentation of the historic structures that existed on the island and a recreation of this complex as a state of the art rejuvenation spa would be another development catalyst. A high end local restaurant with a smaller local fusion cuisine bistro could be located on the island. A contemporary design could be employed on the hotel structure to contrast the restored historic complex. This updated design should be LEED certified and fully sustainable in all aspects of water collection, mechanical cooling/ventilation, passive solar technology, gray water recycling, etc. It should be a model for hotel development on St. Croix and could be a contemporary architectural beacon strategically centered in the Harbor with Christiansted's historic buildings as a stunning backdrop.

The island's serenity and sense of escapism could be enhanced with walking trails and strategically placed signage that identifies native flora and fauna. Protestant Cay is a habitat for the endangered species, St. Croix ground lizard (*Ameiva polops*) and the Egger's Century Plant (*Agave eggersiana*) which are focal points to promote this type of eco-cultural tourism.

Potential funding sources to execute this much needed development could be new market credits as well as syndication of federal tax Credits combined with local tax credits. The uniqueness of this site and its viability to become a 5 star hotel/spa development will make it an attractive site for hotel investors.

Boardwalk Extension and Enhancement: Linking the Christiansted waterfront from beyond the boundaries of its historic district on both its western and eastern edges would be beneficial to the town and to achieve this link, Fort Christiansvaern has to be circumvented. Revitalizing downtown waterfronts is a

proven catalyst to increase economic activity in a city or town. By creating distinct and large scale development anchors on opposite ends of the town, this pedestrian waterfront walk will encourage small and large businesses to locate along its path. Even inter-coastal water ferry businesses would be encouraged to shuttle people from activity points along the boardwalk or across the Harbor to Protestant Cay. With air and water services all occurring in close proximity to each other, the boardwalk will be a highly activated public space. To ensure public safety, proper lighting, video surveillance cameras, vibrant businesses and high foot traffic will be needed to achieve this goal. As previously stated, this structure should use high performing materials in this high salt and storm prone environment which will reduce maintenance costs and promote a long life span.

Note: All development anchors and previously defined residential and commercial improvements can be executed under present Zoning Laws. The only exemptions that need to be addressed are areas defined as Commercial (eg. - the road that Charles Harwood Hospital is located on) since it does not allow for any residential units to be built. Also, any zoning designation of private property allows for home occupations as long as they do not have more than 1 employee in addition to the business owner. In live/work residential developments, there might be a need to increase this number to no more than 3 employees plus the business owner. This is needed when there is small furniture manufacturing or ware production that require assistants to fabricate items as well as a sales person to run the retail side of a business. These are amendments needed for the existing zoning laws or standards that will evolve from the implementation of future smart or form codes.

### **Epilogue**

Any town planning success is defined by the involvement of the citizens it will affect. In the CEZ, this fact is no exception. Due to local and global economic conditions, citizens cannot expect the local government to be the only driving force to effectuate changes proscribed in a town plan. Although the government can be the spark to get things going, the citizens are the fuel to create the fire of change and make it happen. Our community must buy into the goals of a formalized town plan and become full stakeholder participants in making it a reality.

As indicated on the drawing boards, the primary component needed in the CEZ is increased residential units. More commercial ventures would result from more people living in town. More hotel developments from boutiques to 4 and 5 star facilities, short term and B&B rental units will attract more visitors to town. Creating a college town community within town limits would also bring vibrancy back into the area. Better inter-island ferry services and newly created inter-coastal ferry services would activate the waterfront and compliment an extended boardwalk. Enhanced greenbelts along the By Pass would lead to jogging, exercise and biking trails, community gardens and would lead to a more fit and health conscious residents. Focusing of establishing small and large scale museums filled with "authentic" cultural products and places to sell these wares would invariably attract locals and more sophisticated travelers looking for and craving a true town center: a revitalized vibrant town of living and commerce known as **Christiansted**.