

Greetings,

Thank you for allowing the opportunity to testify in opposition to the proposed development of The Residences at 340 North, 4I and 4J Estate St. Joseph and Rosendahl. I am the daughter of Alfred Valdemar Raimer, whose property borders the proposed development and proposed easement. My brothers and I are also among the heirs to #4 Estate St. Joseph and Rosendahl, where our family cemetery is located.

The estate of St. Joseph and Rosendahl has been the Raimer family's ancestral home for several generations on St. Thomas. Unfortunately, the Virgin Islands government has no established laws protecting ancestral lands, and so we, and citizens who live in the community neighboring the proposed development, are now responding to this proposal by appealing to you with grave concern.

My great-grandfather George Valdemar Raimer was born on St. Thomas in 1850 and died 86 years later, leaving behind the estate of St. Joseph and Rosendahl. His son, my grandfather David Raimer, is very likely to have been the one who created and maintained the stone terraces that the developer's surveyors found on the property. My cousin Mel Vanterpool sat under the Tamarind tree with me recently and explained how "Uncle D", as my grandfather was affectionately called by many relatives, planted and maintained gardens in that area. St. Joseph and Rosendahl was a farming area and community. The well on the property existed in the time of my great-grandfather and I still shower with that well water daily.

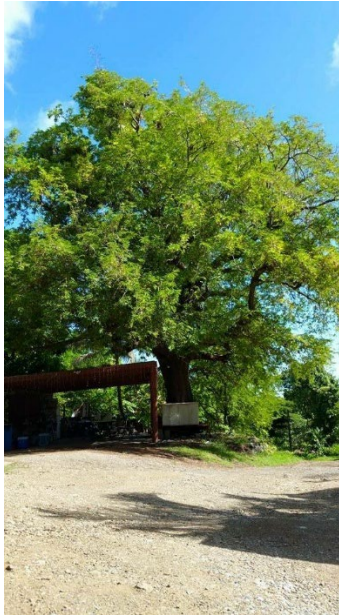
I reside at 4H St. Joseph and Rosendahl. The proposed easement to the development would border this property and disrupt the continuity of the family's connection to both our Tamarind tree, which has stood for over 100 years, across the "gut", to our family cemetery where many Raimers, including myself, can attest is "where my navel string is buried", along with being the resting place of my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and several more extended family members. Although this is an appeal to Virgin Islands cultural tradition, it fits in the context of endangerment, as not only wildlife species are in danger of being lost in the Virgin Islands.

Raimer Family Cemetery



The Tamarind tree has a girth so wide that it would take several adults holding hands to circle it completely. The tree has stood for so long that even my grandfather David, who was born in 1905, did not know who planted it. This Tamarind tree has weathered countless storms and hurricanes and has been the staunch, silent witness to generations of family gatherings. Disrupting the underground ecosystem around it by displacing so much earth in a concentrated area and redirecting the natural waterflows could lead to its demise. For us Virgin Islanders, this Tamarind tree is a sacred ancestral landmark.

#### Raimer Family Ancestral Tamarind Tree



The guts have an interestingly notorious history. Long ago, before Rosendahl Drive was paved, these guts wreaked havoc whenever heavy rains fell. At times, the road could not even be traversed on foot. There are several guts running from Skyline, down past Rosendahl Drive, and beyond. One main gut borders the proposed road to the development property. This gut contributed greatly to the road being washed away completely at the corner of Rosendahl Drive and Magens Bay Road during Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Sometime later, Public Works and a company from Puerto Rico worked on the road, focusing on the culvert at our driveway entrance, and tried to create a waterway system to control the waterflow from that gut. However, a good amount of rainfall still turns the road into a river, flooding homes along the way. I posted a picture of the flooding that was taken after TS Ernesto (2024), in the DPNR meeting chat. In the meeting we did not have the sense that these developers understood the topography of the area. Rerouting more water to that gut would have disastrous consequences to both the graveyard property at #4 and ours at #4H Estate St. Joseph and Rosendahl, as well as to the homes and property further down the road.

Flooding of Rosendahl Drive after TS Ernesto (taken by Leslie Richardson, Sr.)



Consequently, members of the Raimer family have submitted a petition asking that this project not be approved. We are extremely concerned about losing the integrity of the land by cutting swaths to build a road on our cemetery property, clear-cutting to build this large housing development on land in an area that cannot sustain a project of this size, and the addition of hundreds of gallons of wastewater, with a functioning and in-use well so near downstream from the development.

We question not only the planning but the motives. Construction on nearby Donoe has stalled. Tutu high-rise apartments still stand like stark skeletons on a hill. How are we helping the community by abandoning spaces already primed to build affordable housing by creating an 80+ unit development in which only 18 units will be dedicated to affordable housing? This has the sense of a gateway, to covertly build exclusive communities under the guise of affordability that will eventually shut out the people who need housing. After Irma and Maria, it took several months for the residents of the Lovenlund development to get the appropriate help they needed. Also, during those hurricanes, the panels from the solar farm in Donoe wreaked havoc on neighboring homes, as the debris from the panels slammed into houses and structures nearby. Across the Virgin Islands exclusive, gated communities are popping up. We are all familiar with the infamous ones that challenged access to our beaches. As much as we need to take care of our own and provide housing for all people of the Virgin Islands, we should do so responsibly and hold those accountable who do not understand or have little to no experience building structures within the unique geography, topography, and climate of the Virgin Islands.



I am again grateful to have the opportunity to voice these concerns and my opposition to this project. My opposition comes from a personal and cultural perspective, as well as one of logical, meaningful concern for the overall environmental and ecological impact of this development. When weighed, this is not the best path to establishing affordable housing in our community, and it will be a detriment to the already existing community and environment in the area.

Sincerely and with gratitude,



Maria T. Raimer  
#4H Estate St. Joseph and Rosendahl

