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RE: Opposition to The Residences at 340 North and Advocacy for Adaptive Reuse in Charlotte Amalie Historic District

To Mrs. Leia Laplace,

My name is LaDene Lewis-Rosier, a proud born and raised St. Thomian, who is not just a professional Interior Designer for the past 18 years, but a current graduate student in Architecture with a focus in Historic Preservation and Adaptive Reuse. I joined this professional tract with the singular goal of helping my home, of the Virgin Islands. Developing new residential communities like The Residences at 340 North in St. Thomas while nearby historic districts remain vacant and deteriorating raises several sustainability concerns. Concerns exist particularly regarding land use, carbon emissions, and thermal pollution which will intensify the urban heat island effect further stressing local ecosystems under climate change.

The reasons why we love our natural garden neighborhood of Rosendahl are endless, however, the reasons are all rooted in the value each and every one of our neighbors have placed on preserving the tranquility, beauty, and harmony of our serene hillside environment, which we seek to protect from any disruptive development. This plan seeks to replace our natural surfaces with heat-absorbing materials like pavement of roads and driveways and impermeable surfaces like the rooftops themselves. This leaves no space for vegetation and local wildlife. This is a dangerous position on an island that is already feeling the effects of climate change.

We should not allow these types of large-scale greenfield developments to destroy the natural habit of these hillside suburban neighborhoods. We understand that before we can talk about the intense environmental impacts we must first deal with the socio-economic concerns namely the housing needs on island. One such solution is the revitalization of our historic district. A study of the existing data shows that our historic district is vastly underutilized and the majority of existing buildings are sitting empty. The solution is not to further neglect the existing infrastructure and cultural assets, but rather to think outside the box of local norms. Adaptively reusing these existing structures can revitalize communities, preserve local heritage and boost the economy. Is there any data or proof that shows through research that this development will solve the majority of our local issues? It is said the most sustainable building is the one that is already built.

Sustainability means that we take a hard look at where our most valuable resources lies which is not new land developments but rather in our world renown historic district. By rehabilitating existing buildings in downtown Charlotte Amalie we will see the results in lower carbon emissions, as it reduces the need for new materials and takes advantage of the embodied energy in the current structures. New developers show they care about our heritage, our culture, and our future by throwing their financial support towards the adaptive reuse our historic commercial buildings. These building can be adapted for use as Residences in the form of apartments, condos, studios and lofts. This approach not only **balances new development with Historic Preservation but revitalizes an area of our own island that speaks to our very identity.**

We as Virgin Islanders must protect and prioritize our natural habitat, resources and our socio-economic needs. We have this opprtunity to optimize land use, minimizing carbon emissions, while still accommodating the need for modern, energy-efficient housing for our locals all the whole breathing me life to a historic district that demands our loyalty.

Areas we can see instant improvement will include **waste management, water conservation, economy boost through job creation and small business infusion, raising of property values, and a resurgence in local pride and tourism. This of course is not to mention how the government would vendor from the payment of property taxes.**

As proud Virgin Islanders let's not just look at temporary options that do nothing for the overall community, but rather let us join in a comprehensive plan that benefits **OUR PEOPLE FIRST** and secures a future for our children and their children after.

With commitment to our island's future,
LaDene Lewis Rosier
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