

To: Leia Laplace
Territorial Planner
Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources
St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. 00802

From: Aliya T. Felix Blyden
On behalf of The Hodge Family:
Retired Judge Verne A. Hodge; Bridget Hodge, Teresa Hodge, Verne Hodge, Jr.

Re: Formal Objection to Application No. CCZP0091-25

Good day,

I submit this letter as a **strong and unequivocal objection** to Application No. CCZP0091-25, submitted by Sweetgrass Valley Properties, LLC, seeking to rezone Parcel 1-68 from **R-1 (Residential Low Density)** to **R-3 (Residential Medium Density)** for the stated purpose of developing “workforce housing.”

My family owns **Parcels 1-18, 1-12, and 1-11**, all of which directly border or lie immediately adjacent to the parcel(s) proposed for rezoning. We will be among the most directly and substantially impacted property owners should this rezoning proceed.

1. The Proposed Rezoning Directly Harms Adjacent Property Owners

Changing the zoning from R-1 (residential low-density) to R-3 (residential medium-density) would fundamentally alter the long-established residential character of our neighborhood. Increased density, traffic, noise, transient occupancy, criminal activity, and structural scale associated with R-3 zoning are incompatible with the existing low-density residential environment.

Our family’s investment in Parcels 1-18, 1-12, and 1-11 was made with the reasonable expectation that the surrounding area would remain low-density, consistent with R-1 zoning. This proposed change violates that expectation and undermines the stability of our community and our rights as property owners.

2. Material Facts Were Disclosed for the First Time at the DPNR Hearing

At the public hearing, it was revealed **for the very first time** that:

- A trailer “**mancamp**” would be **relocated into our neighborhood** if the rezoning is approved.
- Parcel **1-61-4** would be **treated as part of the proposed development**, even though **no notice was ever issued** to residents indicating that parcel’s inclusion.

These disclosures were **never part of the original notice** to adjacent property owners. Such omissions materially misrepresent the scope and nature of the project.

3. Residents Have Been Denied Due Process

The failure to notify residents regarding the inclusion of Parcel 1-61-4 and the omission of any reference to a trailer mancamp prevented property owners, including my family, from preparing informed testimony or conducting due diligence prior to the hearing.

This is a clear breach of procedural fairness and due process, and it invalidates the adequacy of the public notice provided. No rezoning request should advance when there has been a failure to comply with statutory/due process notice requirements.

4. This Community Has Repeatedly Fought Attempts to Alter Its Longstanding Residential Character which Must Be Preserved

Our neighborhood was established as a low-density residential subdivision with the intent of providing a safe and stable community for families. That intent is not theoretical; it is rooted in the lived experiences of the very families who built this community.

My grandfather, the original owner of the properties mentioned, shared the following history:

“I was born on St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. on November 16, 1933, into a family living in abject poverty, with no land holdings and seven illegitimate children. Through hard work, education, and perseverance, my wife and I were able to obtain parcels of land for our three children at 1-11, 1-12, and 1-18 Estate Bakkeroe. As a young lawyer in 1969, seeking protection and opportunity for my children, I agreed that the low-lying area of Bakkeroe would be used for recreational purposes for the children of the subdivision. However, over the years, multiple efforts have been made to rezone this area from R-1 to R-3, and I have always found it necessary to oppose such attempts.”

These statements reflect a generational commitment to maintaining the subdivision as a low-density, family-centered community. The land use intentions established decades ago were clear: the low-lying area was promised for community recreational use, not commercial, medium or any other density development. No such recreational improvements have ever materialized, yet residents continue to face repeated attempts to rezone this and the surrounding area for purposes entirely contrary to that original agreement.

Families like ours, now into the third and fourth generations, and those new to the area, relied on those representations when purchasing and maintaining property in “Estate Bakkeroe.” Allowing the proposed rezoning would violate the original purpose of the subdivision, disregard the commitments made to early homeowners, and further erode the trust and stability that have anchored this community for more than half a century.

5. “Workforce Housing” Does Not Justify the Insertion of a Trailer Camp Into a Low-Density Neighborhood

While workforce housing is an important public policy objective, this proposal is not traditional housing. The introduction of a trailer mancamp into a quiet, low-density residential neighborhood is inappropriate, incompatible, and does not serve the best interests of existing residents.

The proposed development would significantly and negatively impact adjacent parcels, including **1-18, 1-11, and 1-12**, which our family own, in ways that cannot be mitigated through conditions or design changes.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, including procedural defects, lack of proper notice, incompatibility with neighboring R-1 properties, and the inappropriate introduction of a transient trailer facility into a longstanding residential community, the Hodge family strongly objects to Application No. CCZP0091-25 and respectfully demand that the requested rezoning be denied in full. We further request that DPNR require proper re-notification of all affected property owners and schedule a new public hearing. The public cannot be deprived of meaningful participation through incomplete or misleading notice. Thank you for providing interested parties the opportunity to submit comments and objections and trust that our concerns will be given full and careful consideration.

Please confirm receipt of this objection via the same means of receipt (aliyafelix@gmail.com) and ensure that the objection is entered into the official record.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Aliya Felix Blyden
Aliya T. Felix Blyden on behalf of:

The Hodge Family

Property Owner, Parcels 1-18, 1-11, and 1-12

St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

January 9, 2026