

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee regarding this proposed rezoning.

- Background
  - To aid the USVI in recovery from hurricanes Irma and Maria, FEMA and other US government entities awarded \$25 billion (perhaps as much as \$43 billion) to be used in the next 5 to 8 years. St Thomas plans several major projects, which must be started soon so as not to forfeit the funding.
  - Such projects will require a major influx of off-Island construction workers; housing needs to be provided immediately.
    - Sweetgrass Development has purchased the Estate Bakkerro properties referenced in the zoning appeal, and plans to provide hotel type housing for 450 people in 15 prefab units. Additionally, a cafeteria, bar, and laundry facilities will also be on site (no amenities are provided in the very small hotel rooms).
  - Note that R-3 zoning, although termed “medium” density, is a massive increase in a neighborhood of R-1 single family residences.
  - I am surprised at how few parcel owners were included in the written invitation to attend the hearing of December 29<sup>th</sup>. I would think the notice would reach farther from the property lines of the requesting owner.
- Additional facts and concerns re Project as presented
  - Sweetgrass presented “preliminary” drawings at the hearing on December 29, 2025.
    - *These drawings are not preliminary!* They are 41 pages of complete Construction Documents, and are noted as being the BID SET. The Developer appears to assume that this upzone request has already been granted.
    - The Site Plan fails to address storm water runoff. I remind you that my property is at the end of the gut that crosses I-68 and is vulnerable to pollution (petroleum products) and flooding
      - Retention pond(s), pervious parking and circulation surfaces (such as permeable pavers). Ellerton Maynard expressed concern about this as well.
      - Setbacks: although not indicated, appear to be only 10 ft to adjoining property (I-67).
  - *Environmental Impact Study: None provided;* this should be required.
    - The Developer stated during the Hearing that only currently disturbed land would be affected by this project. According to terrain maps, the project covers most of that drainage area, the gut.
  - Impact on existing local infrastructure
    - Parking impact: already a problem in this area, this project provides parking for less than half the 450 new residents
    - Public transportation: The developer (Sweetgrass) claims that the construction companies would provide van or bus service. This would be 24 hours a day, as these projects are sure to run 3 shifts = noise pollution.
  - Other impacts
    - Light pollution from the “amenities” buildings (including a bar), and overall parking lot and site lighting
    - Noise pollution: 450 people in a very small area.

- The **MAJOR CONCERN**: What happens at this site after the temporary hotel units are removed?
  - Sweetgrass Development has indicated that they plan to build condos for the local middleclass workforce.
    - Under **R-3 zoning as requested- this means 6 STORY BUILDINGS** with potentially **LIMITED SETBACKS** and even **MORE ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE**, as well as “limited” commercial venues. I ask- what types and size?

The above is a summary of my **concerns** for the **FIRST** project- workforce housing for the planned major Island wide construction projects, and my **objections** to what should be everyone's major concern- the **SECOND** project- 6 story condos with who knows how many residents.

I respectfully ask the DPNR to consider approaching this as follows: Require the zoning request be for a temporary RUE (Reasonable Use Exemption) that would allow the much-needed temporary housing, but retain the existing R-1 zoning. I do not believe that R-3 in this location is in compliance with the St Thomas Comp Plan (a required document). Affordable housing is a need. More housing is a need. But it NEEDS to be located in more appropriate areas- medium to high density areas with amenities- not in the middle of low density, maximum 2 story residences.

Thank you for your consideration

Linda Sohlberg, Architect  
Owner, Estate Bakkerø parcel 1-67