

Responses - FINAL

6/10/2025

1. **Comment:** Safety concerns due to lack of sidewalks and increased traffic. Previously proposed access road is narrow, crosses an aging bridge, and passes through areas with high pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Proximity to public housing community which struggles with crime. Overconcentration of subsidized housing risks social strain.

Response: The revised site plan proposes to access the site via a vehicular and pedestrian connection to the west of the site via the public road adjacent to UVI's simulation center to help minimize additional vehicular traffic in the neighborhoods east of the site. Pedestrian and cyclist access will be maintained to the east via a secured pathway. This eastern access road will be wide enough to be used as a second means of access to the site for emergency vehicles. The team will coordinate with Port Authority and the University to explore this proposed route. Please reference the revised site plan on sheet A-001.

2. **Comment:** Misuse of public funds to build new housing in high-risk zones rather than repair hurricane-damaged homes.

Response: The Benoit Group is not aware of any misuse of public funds to build new housing however we are aware that there is a dearth of new housing available to residents of the territory, and St. Thomas more specifically; an issue that we feel this project will help to alleviate.

3. **Comment:** Health concerns due to aged neighborhood sewage system which is prone to backups and development's impact on existing wells in the area.

Response: The project team is sensitive to the infrastructure challenges in the surrounding

neighborhood. Consequently, the intent is to design an onsite wastewater management system that does not put further strain on the existing sewer system and does not contaminate water runoff or surrounding wells. Further study is required to detail the system, but the Magens Junction II development is being used as a precedent in the design process.

4. **Comment:** Transparency. Final plans differing from conceptual. No environmental or archaeological studies conducted. Proposed development too large, impractical, an incompatible with area's topography, potentially accelerating environmental damage.

Response: Several primary objectives of the updated development proposal center around the site's significant topography and its effect on the flow of water. The area of development is concentrated in the flatter area of the site, leaving the steeper slopes natural. This provides a landscaped buffer between the existing neighborhood, utilizes vegetation as a method for slowing the flow of water and reducing runoff, and minimizes grading and excavation. Additionally, by elevating the building over the parking, the area of land being developed occupies a smaller footprint and minimizes the displacement of water within the flood zone. Drainage swales will be utilized in the parking zone in order to control water runoff to areas below the site. Lastly, the current scheme proposes to demolish the existing structures and paved areas on site to restore the natural drainage pathway of the gut as much as possible and eliminate culverts where feasible to help prevent blockages from causing additional flooding. No new buildings are proposed within the drainage gut and setback.

The current design team, consists of professionals focused on providing a sustainable design solution. As additional information about the site is assessed through geotechnical, environmental and civil engineering, the proposal will be adjusted to respond appropriately to the site conditions, including, but not limited to, controlling runoff and erosion, as well as avoiding impact on the natural flow of the gut.

5. **Comment:** Flood zone concerns. Development proposed in Flood Zone A and AO. Property's topography is steep.

Response: The revised development proposal considers the drainage gut that runs north to south through the site, as well as FEMA's 0.2% (500-Year) Advisory Base Flood Elevations. The proposed development will follow guidelines provided by Resilient VI and the 2024 USVI Hazard Mitigation and Resilience Plan as feasible to reduce the risk of riverine flooding and increase the amount of rainfall that permeates into the ground. The western edge of the gut will remain natural. The eastern edge will consider solutions that are both structurally sound and natural in appearance, such as the use of terraced and landscaped gabion walls. The lowest level of multifamily units is raised above the grade level to further reduce risk of any residences being flooded. As the design is developed, the team will further explore methods of water retention on site to prevent overflow of the gut.

6. **Comment:** Alternative suggested, the former Warren E. Brown apartments' location, due to central location and better access to infrastructure. Bourne field another alternative suggested for redevelopment.

Response: TBG is not aware of the Bourne Field site and currently working with the Port Authority on the Thatch Farm site.

7. **Comment:** Infrastructure Issues. Proposed access road and state of current roads (ability to handle current and future traffic).

Response: An alternate access point west of the site via the public road adjacent to UVI's simulation center is being considered in order to avoid impacting the neighborhood roads. Another point of consideration is to provide improvements to the public road adjacent to the school as it leads to the site, in order to improve access that benefits the surrounding

neighborhood. The team will work with the Port Authority, DPNR and UVI in order to determine the best solution for the surrounding areas.

8. **Comment:** Misalignment with Hazard Mitigation plans and Community interests. More sustainable housing solutions needed.

Response: The proposed development intends to utilize multiple strategies from the 2024 USVI Hazard Mitigation and Resilience Plan including elevating the structures to help mitigate flood risk, providing permeable areas, swales and on-site water retention to slow water flow to the communities downhill from the site and help mitigate riverine flooding. The building will be designed to meet high velocity winds for resistance to hurricanes, incorporate greywater reuse, provide on site wastewater management and provide a building layout that encourages self-shading and cross-ventilation as passive cooling strategies.