

Frederiksted St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

June 5–10, 2022



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Strategies for Equitable Redevelopment

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About the Urban Land Institute

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2022 alone, more than 2,800 events, both virtual and in person, were held in cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

COVER PHOTO: Frederiksted is a testament to resilience and spirit. (Panel sponsor)

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About ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day Advisory Services panel (ASP) is tailored to meet a sponsor's needs. ULI members are briefed by the sponsor, engage with stakeholders through in-depth interviews, deliberate on their recommendations, and make a final presentation of those recommendations. A report is prepared as a final deliverable.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's ASP assignments can make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials,

academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this ASP report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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Introduction and Key Recommendations

FREDERIKSTED AND THE GREATER U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS (USVI) face challenges different from those of most areas of the mainland United States. In formulating its recommendations, the panel acknowledged the following themes and distinctive circumstances affecting the Virgin Islands Housing Authority (VIHA) and the Virgin Islands:

- Hurricanes, COVID-19, and other acute social issues have disrupted/permanently altered lives.
- Post-hurricane and COVID recovery funding have provided unprecedented levels of investment.
- Change is difficult but necessary.
- Old thinking, old systems, and symbols may need to be challenged.
- The historical significance of St. Croix is not widely understood, documented, or promoted.
- A unique opportunity exists to turn the corner, reinforce identity, and redefine the future.
- Historic legacies are powerful and potentially transformational symbols.
- Frederiksted as Freedom City—it is a symbol of resistance and resilience.

The Panel's Assignment

At the request of VIHA, ULI has convened two previous Advisory Services panels to provide recommendations in establishing an integrated approach to recovery and reconstruction efforts and reach community consensus about how the territory can evolve over the next 20 years and beyond. This panel concentrates on the implementation of the Redevelopment Plan as well as action items and critical path sequencing for the actualization of the plan.

The key questions asked of the panel were as follows:

- Redevelopment Plan implementation: How can VIHA develop a framework for the implementation of the Redevelopment Plan?

- Community and resident wellness and empowerment best practices: How can VIHA best implement housing strategies that achieve holistic wellness, social equity, and economic mobility for all Virgin Islanders, as outlined in the Bright Path model?
- Key partnerships strategies: How should VIHA obtain buy-in from key stakeholders to implement the Redevelopment Plan?
- Energy diversification approaches for sustainability: How does VIHA revitalize new communities that are resilient, use fewer natural resources, and are less dependent on the energy grid?

Key Recommendations

Key recommendations from the panel are the following:

Create Key Partnerships

The panel sees the creation of a chief housing officer position as necessary to coordinate the multifaceted housing demands at the governmental level. The position's main responsibilities should be setting policy, strategic planning, prioritization of resources, oversight of existing agencies (especially VIHA, Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority—VIHFA, and Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority—VIEDA), and “ambassadorial” functions, such as leading engagement with the legislature and community on behalf of the governor and a cluster of agencies.

Develop Organizational and Staff Capacity

VIHA does not currently have the staff capacity or required expertise to implement its ambitious Redevelopment Plan. The panel recommends hiring a professional recruiter to fill key open positions, obtaining technical assistance training from experts and support from subject matter experts, and engaging philanthropic partners to supplement staff salaries.

Prioritize Phasing According to Funding Availability

The panel recommends that VIHA prioritize projects that are not hyperfocused on tax-exempt bonds/4 percent financing, but instead have secured funding that is ready for deployment. The projects in the implementation plan should be broken up into distinct, achievable phases based on human resources constraints. Furthermore, the substantial public dollars coming in from the federal government can be effectively leveraged to attract private investment, having a catalytic effect on investment in Frederiksted.

Conduct Effective and Inclusive Community Engagement

Equitable development is impossible without inclusive community engagement. The panel recommends that VIHA prioritize listening to the community it serves and being responsive to the needs of residents, shaping what it hears into actionable projects and programs. The panel further recommends that VIHA identify and engage community leaders to create a conduit for local interests and concerns to be more easily understood and managed in a timely and effective manner. This means meeting people where they are and including residents as key partners in the engagement process.

Empower Residents

VIHA's Bright Path resident services model has the right goals but lacks sound measurement mechanisms. The panel recommends that specific, measurable, and equitable metrics be developed to implement the ambitious Bright Path model. Furthermore, the panel recommends that VIHA use an inclusive property management approach in service of the Bright Path model's goals.

Focus on Resilience

The panel recommends that resilience underlie VIHA's redevelopment plan. It is critical to seize the opportunity to develop housing that can withstand myriad climate change-induced natural disasters that inevitably will occur during the lifetime of the buildings. This includes relying on industry best practices and technology to plan for and mitigate the effects of natural disasters and a changing climate.



Community Input and Equity

THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS is an unincorporated territory of the United States located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, about 1,100 miles from North America and just 40 miles east of Puerto Rico. The main islands include St. Croix (population 41,004), St. Thomas (population 42,261), and St. John (population 3,881), with a total 2020 USVI population of 106,405. Frederiksted, located on the western end of St. Croix, has fewer than 1,000 residents in the town itself, but nearly 10,000 people reside in the western side of the island. ULI conducted two previous Advisory Services panels in USVI: 2018 in Christiansted, St. Croix, and 2019 in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas.

During its meetings in St. Croix, the panel was struck by the shared passion for the history of the territory and particularly for Frederiksted as Freedom City. Panelists were also struck by residents' skepticism and VIHA's need to build more trust among territory leaders, agencies, businesses, the community, and residents whose very lives will be affected by the Redevelopment Plan. The panel believes that in order to build that trust, VIHA must honor and celebrate the history of Frederiksted. This recognition must include the territory's trauma of a colonial legacy and its continuing disadvantages and injustices.

Territory leaders must focus on building more effective partnerships with public, private, and community stakeholders to align a combination of leadership, capital, and community to achieve an inclusive and transformative Redevelopment Plan vision. The panel recommends that all aspects of the Redevelopment Plan implementation should be undertaken through the lens of ULI's 10 Principles for Embedding Racial Equity in Real Estate Development (learn more: knowledge.uli.org/en/reports/research-reports/2022/10-principles-for-embedding-racial-equity-in-real-estate-development).

10 PRINCIPLES FOR EMBEDDING RACIAL EQUITY IN REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

1. Embed racial equity across all aspects of your real estate development practice.
2. Commit to building your knowledge and optimizing your personal and institutional power.
3. Articulate the racial equity business case.
4. Use data to ensure equitable processes and outcomes.
5. Leverage capital to drive equitable change.
6. Understand and address current and historical context.
7. Recognize the power of language.
8. Create a community-centered development process.
9. Build trust, transparency, and credibility.
10. Form strong, intersectoral partnerships.

Given these circumstances, the panel placed great importance on what it heard from residents. These important voices focused not only on Frederiksted, St. Croix, and VIHA, but also on larger systemic issues. Among the opinions heard by the panel:

- A variety of affordable housing options needs to be offered at all income levels.
- The VIHA staff has limited capacity to implement the Redevelopment Plan or deploy federal funds.
- Comprehensive development is needed: food deserts, lack of public transportation, and absence of “attractions” for residents are all evident.
- There is a top-down approach to decision-making.
- The community shares pride and strength with an activist spirit.
- A need exists for comprehensive housing developments that support an ecosystem for thriving communities.
- Housing needs to respond to local climate and culture.
- There is a lack of confidence in the government to execute a large investment program and deliver on its promises.
- Communication about federal investment programs is lacking.
- There is too much reliance on outside consultants and companies.
- Government agencies fail to coordinate with each other.
- The legacy of colonialism continues through lack of adequate local impact, job creation, or wealth building.
- Frederiksted suffers from systemic disinvestment.



The Redevelopment Plan

VIHA'S VISION is to create vibrant, dynamic, sustainable communities. This includes supporting families to evolve economically, improve lives, and strengthen communities through good-quality, safe, and affordable housing. This also means providing myriad services to empower public housing residents. The scope of challenges facing the territory and the city of Frederiksted is much broader than any public housing authority can resolve on its own.

These needs include ensuring safe, healthy, and affordable/attainable housing for a mix of incomes. They include access to good-quality education for basic literacy, job-ready skills, and business formation. These also include access to community, civic, and wellness facilities (e.g., libraries, community centers, recreation, health and wellness). Furthermore, greater economic opportunity and wealth-building strategies are needed to retain current territory residents and attract the return of members of the diaspora. This will help mitigate the historic brain drain that accelerated after Hurricanes Irma and Maria and COVID-19.

The Plan

VIHA's Redevelopment Plan calls for a five-phase approach to produce 3,000 housing units over 10 years. According to

the plan, the projected cost is more than \$1 billion from the following funding sources:

- \$392 million from tax-exempt bond financing/4 percent Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC);
- \$205 million in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding;
- \$292 million in Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR); and
- \$137 million in VIHA and other funding.

The Target Population

Who is the beneficiary of this development? Based on a USVI area median income (AMI) of \$37,254, the monthly income is \$3,104. If a typical apartment rents for \$1,300 per month, the

typical household will spend 42 percent of its income on rent. Inclusive housing is fundamental to any great housing plan. VIHA's Redevelopment Plan should be no different. Increasing access to affordable housing is the most cost-effective strategy for reducing childhood poverty and increasing economic mobility in the United States. Having viable affordable housing options for seniors and families at various income levels is imperative for VIHA's mission. VIHA must incorporate a mixed-income model in its communities that will serve as a catalyst, achieving better outcomes for residents through economic mobility opportunities. This equitable, resilient, and integrated housing development must enhance the quality of life and ensure local support and financing for a mix of incomes—ideally one-third low income, one-third moderate income, and one-third unrestricted.

VIHA's mission should also include providing housing for persons 55 years and older who need an opportunity for affordable independent living. This effort also encompasses supportive services to ensure seniors can age comfortably and without fear of displacement. Furthermore, family housing must be provided that ensures that low- to moderate-income families (0 to 100 percent of AMI) are not cost burdened and spend no more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Another important target population is moderate-income families (80 to 120 percent of AMI) who could benefit from a gateway to homeownership. These families desire to live in vibrant communities while creating wealth and could do so through homeownership by leveraging VIFHA mortgages and downpayment assistance programs.

Affordable housing options for “missing middle” wage earners like educators, health care workers, administrators, first responders, and the creative class are also crucial. These families may earn a moderate income but are still unable to afford the cost of good-quality, amenity-rich housing near their jobs or the community assets they value. Meeting the needs of “missing middle” wage earners also includes live/work opportunities for those entrepreneurs who are self-employed and need affordable options for living and working.

By serving a mix of incomes in its housing developments, VIHA provides a mechanism to retain its existing talent while attracting new talent to the islands. Research shows that housing is the key to reducing intergenerational poverty and increasing economic mobility for not only its residents, but also other Cruzans.

U.S. Virgin Islands Cost of Living: Rental Housing

	St. Thomas and Water Island	St. John	St. Croix
Efficiency/studio	\$775–\$1,000	\$850–\$1,000	\$700–\$900
Cottage	\$1,200–\$2,000	\$1,200–\$2,000	\$1,200–\$1,800
1 bedroom apartment	\$850–\$1,800	\$950–\$1,800	\$750–\$1,500
2 bedroom apartment	\$1,300–\$2,500	\$1,200–\$3,000	\$1,200–\$2,500
2–3 bedroom condo	\$1,500–\$3,500	\$1,400–\$4,000	\$1,200–\$3,500
2–4 bedroom house	\$1,800–\$4,500	\$2,250–\$5,000	\$1,800–\$4,500

Source: VI Moving Center (www.vimovingcenter.com/cost_of_living) using rental rates from *The Settlers Handbook to the US Virgin Islands*, 19th edition, 2020.

Note: Utilities not included in rental rate estimates.



Redevelopment Plan: Opportunities beyond the Four Walls

IMPLEMENTING VIHA'S AMBITIOUS REDEVELOPMENT PLAN will be no small undertaking. To effectively implement its aggressive plan, the panel believes that VIHA must take the following steps:

- Determine a strategy to build more organizational and staff capacity in both VIHA and VIHFA.
- Review phasing and consider prioritizing the developments that may require the use of little or no federal funds.
- Develop financing mechanisms that provide short-term/bridge solutions to lessen the reliance on federal funding.
- Leverage federal funding by attracting complementary impact investors.
- See the redevelopment process as an opportunity to engage the community.
- Prioritize building trust with the community through early wins.
- Attract complementary investment by improving the community brand.

Organizational and Staff Capacity Building

To effectively implement the VIHA Redevelopment Plan, VIHA needs both technical expertise and staff capacity to lead and execute its deliverables. VIHA currently has several key positions open that are needed to execute the plan. Although the agency has been actively working to recruit talent locally and abroad, VIHA has found that the high cost of living has made its salary offerings insufficient to meet the expectation of new hires and qualified recruits. This factor has made it increasingly difficult to retain and attract new talent.

The panel recommends that VIHA's recruiting efforts should focus on recent graduates from accredited planning and real estate programs on the U.S. mainland. VIHA should also consider offering scholarships that encourage local high school graduates with high potential to pursue a career in

urban planning. VIHA may also want to engage a philanthropic partner to supplement the salaries of young professionals.

It is the panel’s understanding that VIHA and VIHFA could benefit from additional expertise and institutional knowledge to implement complex capital stacks involving intergovernmental priorities and requirements. For example, sophisticated financing programs like tax-exempt bonds and 4 percent LIHTCs have not been shared between departments or across agencies and have thus gone untapped. However, VIHA’s Redevelopment Plan calls for nearly \$400 million from VIHFA through this financing tool. VIHA and VIHFA must determine a strategy to build more leadership and staff capacity within their agencies, and the panel recommends considering the execution of one or more of these strategies:

- Engage a professional recruiter to assist in identifying qualified talent both locally and abroad.
- Provide technical assistance training in specialized disaster recovery and/or access to FEMA experts as part of a fellowship or capacity-building grant.
- Solicit services for subject matter experts who have experience with federal funding.
- Engage in peer-to-peer learning from organizations like the National Association of Local Housing Finance Agencies (NALHFA), National Development Council

(NDC), National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA), or Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA) that can share best practices. These agencies can share expertise for the use, leveraging, and deployment of resources like tax-exempt bond financing/4 percent LIHTCs; 9 percent LIHTCs; HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program; CDBG; and American Rescue Plan Funding.

Prioritization for Redevelopment Plan Implementation

VIHA must go beyond “business as usual.” The panel recommends that VIHA examine its phasing approach to confirm priorities. Hyperfocus on tax credit transactions absorbs existing staff resources and time, to the exclusion of tactical investments that engage the community and demonstrate a new culture of change.

VIHA must prioritize projects that are not hyperfocused on tax-exempt bonds/4 percent financing and instead focus on projects that have secured funding that is ready for deployment. It is the panel’s observation that the community is jaded and lacks confidence in VIHA to implement large, complex projects. Therefore, tactical investments in community-led initiatives should be incorporated into Phase 1 activities.

VIHA Portfolio Repositioning: Five-Phase Implementation Plan

	Total units	LIHTC units	Total development costs (millions)	LIHTC equity (millions)	FEMA (millions)	CDBG-DR (millions)	Other (millions)	VIHA capital (millions)	Completion
Phase I – three projects	332	332	\$167.8	\$54.0	\$49.1	\$48.2	\$15.5	0	2024
Phase II – two projects	233	233	\$98.5	\$36.5	\$13.2	\$31.5	\$17.3	0	2024
Phase III – eight projects	652	552	\$333.3	\$129.4	\$102.0	\$49.0	\$42.9	\$10.0	2025
Phase IV – three projects	531	531	\$121.9	\$33.2	\$5.2	\$56.4	\$27.1	0	2025
Phase V – 11 projects	1,102	827	\$513.3	\$222.2	\$0.0	\$145.0	\$51.1	\$5.0	2026
Total	2,850	2,475	\$1,234.8	\$475.3	\$169.5	\$330.1	\$153.9	\$15.0	

Assumptions:

1. 100 percent of tax-exempt bond allocation/4 percent LIHTC will be awarded to VIHA for 10 years.
2. Phases I and II are executed simultaneously using two 9 percent tax credit awards and four 4 percent tax credit awards. Completion of both phases in 2024.
3. Phase I includes one project (Tutu Phase I) that closed in 2020 and was scheduled to be completed in 2022.
4. Phasing plan includes 27 projects, totaling 2,850 units, to be completed by 2026. Of 27 projects, 14 require closing TEB/4 percent LIHTC transactions and six of 27 are 9 percent LIHTC transactions.
5. VIHA and VIHFA currently have the staff capacity and expertise to close and deploy TEB/4 percent LIHTCs.

Financing for Redevelopment Plan Implementation

Given that more than 90 percent of the anticipated capital stack is financed using federal funds that either have never been deployed or have experienced severe delays in their deployment, the panel recommends that VIHA consider short-term financing solutions. This will bridge the timing gap and provide more immediate access to the capital needed to implement VIHA's plan. These short-term/bridge funding mechanisms should provide more flexibility and quicker deployment:

- Using traditional HUD 221(d)(4) construction financing;
- Developing a flexible, short-term funding source that can be used to bridge the CDBG-DR, FEMA, and tax-exempt bond financing;
- Seeking conventional, low-interest-rate financing;
- Leveraging VIHA's landholdings as collateral to acquire a short-term bank line of credit;
- Seeking predevelopment financing from intermediaries like Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and Enterprise; and
- Requiring construction financing as part of VIHA's agreement with developers.

Maximizing the use of existing resources will not be enough to achieve VIHA's redevelopment goals, however. VIHA must also create new local funding sources to increase the amount of funding available to produce and preserve affordable housing. It must also provide greater certainty and financial resources for use in St. Croix. New funding streams that VIHA may consider in the medium and long terms include the following:

- New Markets Tax Credits (NMTCs) and historic tax credits;
- Federal Opportunity Zone financing;
- Choice Neighborhood Funding;
- Housing Trust Fund;
- Working with the Port Authority to create a trust fund similar to the one created in Florida that taxes ships/vessels and uses funding for affordable housing;
- Capturing document and recording fees (Sadowski Act in Florida);

- Passing general obligation bonds to provide ancillary gap financing similar to Housing Opportunity Bonds in Atlanta;
- Using tax increment financing (TIF) as currently used across the country but more recently in St. Thomas; and
- Securing private capital from Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), philanthropic organizations, social impact capital, and opportunity zone funding.

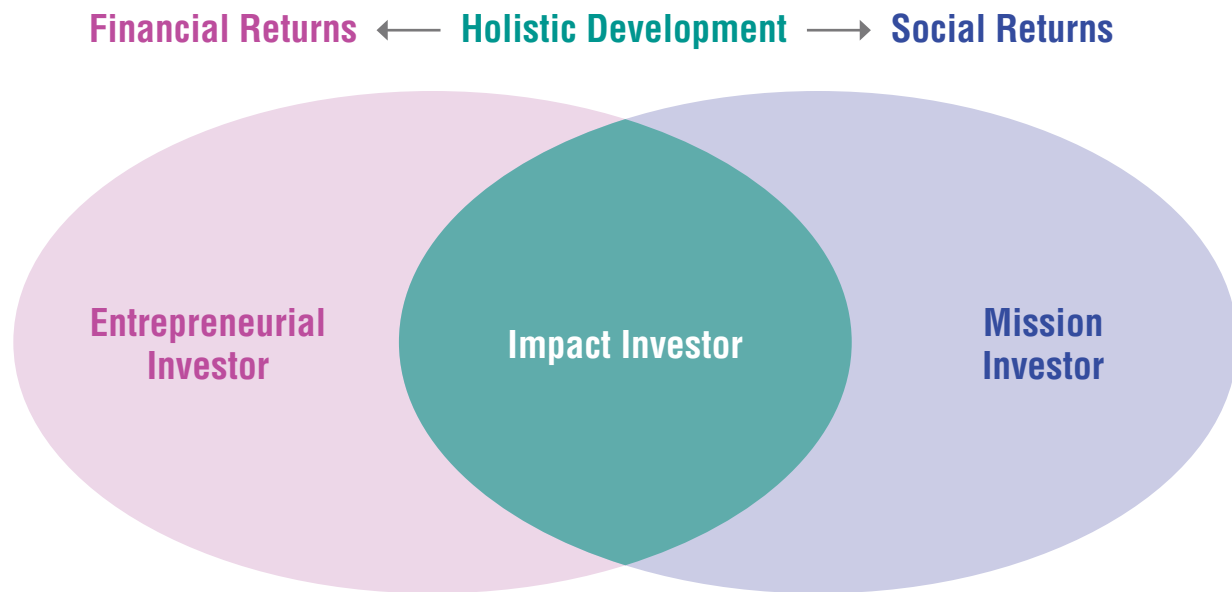
In addition, the panel believes that cross-agency collaboration with VIHFA is critical to execute the Redevelopment Plan, given that nearly \$684 million (68 percent) of the \$1.1 billion is coming through VIFHA.

Opportunity to Attract Impact Investors

Across the country, municipalities and economic development practitioners are increasingly looking to partner with market forces to stimulate economic development in urban neighborhoods. The desire to collaborate with private investors is driven by both a practical response to tighter fiscal constraints and a philosophical shift that views inclusive development as key to improving regional economies.

Government subsidies, such as the federal LIHTC and NMTC, remain important sources of equity capital and have helped leverage private investment for real estate development in low-income neighborhoods for years. However, in the panel's experience, private capital in tax credit deals flows only on a project-specific basis, attracted by the benefit of the tax credit. While the completed projects undoubtedly offer benefits to the neighborhood such as affordable housing units or a new health care facility, they rarely catalyze other neighborhood projects financed solely by private capital without public subsidies.

A major opportunity exists today to inspire a diverse cohort of funders to co-invest in real estate development projects located in urban neighborhoods like Frederiksted. This includes government, foundations, commercial banks, businesses, accredited investors, high-net-worth individuals, and anchor institutions. In economic development finance, the industry is starting to see the integration of public and foundation capital within a framework designed to induce both private capital investment and measurable social impact. The movement toward impact investing has made great strides over the past few years, with more than \$2.3 trillion



invested as of 2020 and even larger amounts projected to increase greatly in the next five years, according to the World Economic Forum.

Entrepreneurial investors focus on financial returns, seeking opportunities to achieve commensurate returns for the risk they incur. Mission investors focus on social impact returns and will accept a lower risk-adjusted financial return on their investment. Mission-focused organizations are also willing to make early-stage investments in rising communities. Impact investors sit between the two—hoping to accomplish both sets of goals. Specifically, real estate impact investors seek to achieve attractive risk-adjusted financial returns, while accomplishing meaningful and resonant social impact. They seek a holistic return from their efforts.

An emerging risk-adjusted-return model for social impact investments incorporates private investors in the same capital stack as public subsidies, foundations, and CDFIs. Bringing together this diverse group of investors with different appetites for risk and return can create a larger, blended pool of more flexible capital. At the same time, assembling a blended capital stack means bringing together a diverse set of investors with different requirements for project visualization, oversight, and monitoring.

A rapidly growing group of thought leaders are now allocating a portion of their assets to make investments to generate a measurable social impact, coupled with an attractive financial return. Today's real estate impact investors

include an array of investor types, including family offices, high-net-worth individuals, impact-oriented charitable foundations, accredited investors, and public pension funds. These investors expect a return on their principal investment, but they are open to modest financial returns and longer timelines if their investments can simultaneously generate a measurable positive social impact.

While accounting for the various risk and return expectations, one must also define a clear, collective vision that is holistic at the project, neighborhood, and regional levels. Because these nontraditional capital flows create a unique opportunity, VIHA should explore policy solutions beyond the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) and tax incentives to reduce barriers between traditional community development players and the impact investor movement.

Impact investors are usually not the first mover in economically stagnant communities. Unlike angel investors, impact investors look for early momentum, rather than novel discovery. Therefore, impact investors will refrain from making early investments in the riskiest communities. Typically, government actors must move first and create the conditions for follow-on investment designed to create a positive ripple effect in the local community. Impact investors are careful to move after government and mission investors so enough momentum has been generated to create confidence in the project/neighborhood and the potential to achieve attractive long-term financial returns.

Opportunity to Engage the Community

Any discussion about making new investments in low-income communities should include a conscious effort to understand and address the interests and concerns of neighborhood residents. Equitable development requires existing residents to participate in and benefit from the real estate decisions that shape their neighborhood.

Development without displacement is difficult, and no single person or entity can solve it in its entirety. However, VIHA must think carefully about balancing the needs of local stakeholders with market demands and the expectations of investment partners. Community engagement must be done in a meaningful way so a focus on shared interests creates new opportunities for the neighborhood and empowers residents to take advantage of the subsequent economic growth driven by the project.

Neighborhoods can be poised to enter a phase of accelerated development when deliberate leadership articulates community needs and partners to pursue a shared vision for the project. To be effective, deliberate leadership must be identified and engaged to create a conduit for local interests and concerns to be more easily understood and managed. The panel observed that grassroots neighborhood leaders in Frederiksted watch local real estate development activity closely. Initially, local interests can often be at odds with new development efforts. Frequently seen as invasive, insensitive, and leading to potential displacement, new developments can quickly attract community pushback, especially in neighborhoods with strong and active local organizations.

To address this, the panel recommends that VIHA require developers to incorporate meaningful resident education and engagement into development decisions. Developers entering economically stagnant neighborhoods understand all too well both the importance and the challenge of balancing local interests with the project's financial sustainability. However, when local neighborhood groups have heightened political influence in the development process, it can become difficult for new developers to know how best to keep all of the stakeholders happy. Many anecdotes within the industry exist about developers who have been invited to a community, only to be held accountable by local leaders to commit resources for local interests, such as only hiring certain contractors or earmarking jobs for particular residents.

While development in these communities should certainly provide local jobs, stories shared informally within the

development industry have a similar effect as negative media coverage about a particular neighborhood: it furthers the perception of an added risk that influences how an investor appraises the overall cost of doing business. Not only can these additional costs put a project's viability in jeopardy, but they can also work to deter future private developer participation. Should this occur in Frederiksted, it can potentially derail VIHA's phasing timeline. Therefore, while community engagement can help accelerate development timelines, the panel recommends that VIHA also use current best practices in community engagement to reduce friction and shape community needs into actionable improvements to the overall development plan.

Opportunity to Build Trust through Early Wins

VIHA's Phase 1 developments include two 9 percent tax credit-funded projects and one 4 percent tax credit development. Each of these projects relies heavily on soft funds and one-time extraordinary federal government support. A Choice Neighborhood application and planning process is also underway, and the panel recommends that this planning effort be used to engage local stakeholders in identifying creative solutions to leverage the 332 units under development in Phase 1. The panel believes that this development must consider neighborhood-wide revitalization strategies that eliminate blight, expand local businesses, and encourage investment in privately owned local housing stock. Particular attention should be directed to shop/live, artist/maker, and live/work opportunities along the traditional retail corridors such as Strand, King, Queen, and Prince streets. An opportunity for an early win in this regard could be a "first \$50,000" grant from Phase 1 developments.

Opportunity to Improve the Community Brand and Attract Complementary Investment

In commercial real estate, a community's brand and narrative determine an investor's desire to invest. When a neighborhood's reputation suffers, mainstream businesses and private equity investors tend to overlook it as a place for potential investment. In these situations, trusted, creative, and vocal leaders and organizations can work together, formally or informally, to change the neighborhood's narrative and shore up confidence in the area's viability for investment. In Frederiksted, efforts to connect to the vibrant history and culture of the local

community should be explored through public events, community centers, public art installations, walking tours, documentation of oral history, and cultural signage. By working proactively to change the community brand, it is possible to eliminate or reduce the neighborhood's risk premium when developers, businesses, and private equity investors are considering an investment in the community.

If VIHA's housing projects can be positioned to attract private dollars that serve not just as an investment in tax credits, but also as an equity investment in the neighborhood, then holistic, equitable development becomes far more scalable. The emerging wave of private investors seeking ways to deploy capital in socially responsible projects offers an opportunity to scale the work VIHA is pursuing to reimagine the territory's

affordable housing stock and lift communities like Frederiksted out of economic stagnation.

As VIHA begins to implement its investment strategies, it should engage other key departments and stakeholders to help extend and expand the reach of housing investments. Together, they can better realize and manage the often-competing goals of neighborhood preservation and increased economic development activity. VIHA should consider the ongoing Choice Neighborhood application and planning process to create a viable strategy to fund financially rewarding projects in rising communities that also can catalyze transformative change beyond the four walls of the individual housing developments.



A Framework for Equitable Investment and Inclusive Placemaking

DESIGN EXCELLENCE IS VITAL TO THE SUCCESS of implementing sustainable and impactful housing in Frederiksted. Design plays a vital role in addressing the social determinants of health and well-being. It also is crucial in creating equitable developments that address these determinants, as well as safety, resilience, economic opportunity, culture, and community.

Amplifying Frederiksted's Strengths

The beauty and spirit of Frederiksted are key to making a comprehensive development strategy work. The VIHA sites are integral as part of this vision and can lead the charge for how development should be done. Among the many bountiful assets of these VIHA sites are the great locations near the historic district, waterfront, and beaches, as well as being accessible and connected to major roadways. Furthermore, these locations are home to an active and passionate community, filled with a legacy of local entrepreneurship.

A Comprehensive Approach

The implementation of the housing plan can create impact beyond the site's boundaries and become centers of activity rather than enclaves of inequity. This requires a comprehensive

framework that looks at the context and finds opportunities to leverage the development plans. Following are ideas advancing this comprehensive redevelopment:

- Resilience and safety—Explore on-site renewables to address energy cost burden, use best management practices for stormwater and storm surge control, and explore partnerships to address sea-level rise. Build on the capture of water in cisterns and explore integrating living machines (a form of ecological sewage treatment that mimics natural wetland systems) that could be an opportunity to clean water on site and reuse it. The panel also recommends using native trees for shading and improving air quality. Explore standards such as LEED ND, Living Community Challenge, and WELL communities as guides for healthy living.



Design must consider the context at hand.



TOM HARRIS

Taylor Street Apartments and Housing in Chicago is an example of a project where a community library and mixed-income residential development were combined to reduce costs and provide an amenity for the larger community.

- Community space—The development allows community hubs, such as libraries, theaters, and plazas, to be integrated into the housing. Collaborating to integrate training, education, libraries, health care, and other community services into the design of new housing will yield significant benefits.
- Interconnected sports and recreation—Opportunities for intergenerational play and recreation are key to healthy environments and should be integrated into the developments. This includes sports fields, passive and active green spaces, and connections to the beach and waterfront. Sports can be used for health and relationship building between the developments. This programming can further activate public spaces and build community.
- Parks/green space—Explore internal open community spaces that integrate habitat, productive landscapes, and food, as well as gathering spaces to allow for a diverse array of individuals, families, and neighbors to interact.
- Waterfront—All developments need to create easy connections to the waterfront and beaches, creating waterfronts for all who desire to access this incredible natural amenity.
- Heritage, arts, and culture—The history, arts, and culture of these communities are rich and vibrant. Spaces that allow for each community to have its unique flair and spirit are needed. Engage local artists and residents in interpretive materials and artwork that they can create and curate.
- Universal access for all ages and abilities—Community members, regardless of their ability or age, should be able to benefit and enjoy the positive aspects of comprehensive development.
- Connectivity and mobility—Connecting these developments to job centers and economic opportunity and improving infrastructure are key to supporting residents' economic prosperity. This means embracing mobility and improved connectivity and walkability. Lighting and safe passages to public transit and taxi stations will aid this goal. Opportunities for bikes, e-bikes and e-scooters, and other micro transit exist in Frederiksted.
- Bridging the digital divide—Leverage the proximity to high-speed fiber and explore with other partners how to provide free wi-fi to all residents. This includes finding philanthropic, private-sector, or government resources to bring laptops, tablets, and other devices to residents.



VIHA projects can incorporate best practices for positive resident outcomes.

Building Design, Sustainability, and Resilience

The renovation of VIHA properties should integrate passive design outlined in the “Vernacular Architecture” guide prepared by DLR Group for the USVI Educational Facilities Master Plan to reflect the St. Croix vernacular architecture. In addition, renovation should learn from standards like WELL, Passivhaus, LEED, Living Building Challenge, and a focus on healthy living and materials. These architecture and planning principles should integrate comprehensive climate analysis tools that maximize building placement, microclimate, shade, and landscape.

In addition, integrated systems such as building-integrated photovoltaics and on-site water reuse should be included. Universal accessibility should be a key principle of these sites to allow residents of all abilities and ages to live comfortably in their units.

Some key best practices immediately applicable for VIHA’s redevelopment projects are as follows:

- Passive heating/cooling;
- Stormwater management and efficient water management;
- Housing for all—seniors, workforce, mixed income, market rate;
- Innovative mixed use;
- Connectivity and mobility;
- Recreation;
- Universal design for accessibility;
- Placement of key infrastructure for resilience; and
- Integration of health care, education (training) resources, and schools.



Energy Diversification and Resilience

BLACKOUTS CAUSED BY INEFFICIENT AND BRITTLE GRIDS and energy generators affect all Cruzans, and they are a major disincentive to potential large capital investors in the islands. Investment in resilient, efficient, and renewable electrical generation and distribution systems is an important part of making electricity more affordable and reliable for USVI residents, particularly those within VIHA developments. Given that the first and second ULI Advisory Services panels (ASPs) occurred within the past five years, the panel hopes that VIHA will continue to build upon those recommendations and has provided project-based recommendations relevant to the implementation of VIHA's redevelopment plan.

St. Croix Energy Overview and Existing Conditions

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration and materials provided by the sponsor, St. Croix has a peak electricity demand of 38 megawatts with a capacity of 100 megawatts, served by a single electrical grid run by the Water and Power Authority (WAPA). Electricity rates in 2015 were \$0.47 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), but at the peak of oil price costs, rates increased to \$0.57 per kWh. By mid-2021 USVI experienced an overall decline in rates to \$0.43 per kWh, which remains above the average residential price of \$0.14 per kWh for the United States. WAPA has reduced its reliance on fuel oil for generation. Based on 2019 data, electricity is

generated using propane (67 percent), fuel oil (32 percent), and solar energy (1 percent), with the goal of increasing the percentage of renewable energy generation capacity during peak demand to 30 percent by 2025. Solar continues to be the predominant renewable source, but the panel learned that WAPA has been testing for adding wind energy generation as well.

As stated in the 2019 ASP report for St. Thomas, WAPA's largest challenge is assembling the capital needed to make the improvements to the electrical system needed to strengthen the grid and switch to renewable distributed generation. As a debt-burdened government-owned utility, WAPA has less ability to raise money in the capital

markets than privately owned regulated utilities. WAPA's 2020 Strategic Transformation Plan acknowledges WAPA's precarious financial position, but the utility hopes to capitalize on work completed thus far and use available federal funding to help further its efforts to make electricity more affordable, stable, and resilient for the territory.

Rebuilding to Increase Resilience

The goals and objectives outlined in the WAPA 2020 Strategic Transformation Plan reflect the need to continue to upgrade and rebuild utility infrastructure throughout USVI. Specifically, WAPA plans to either upgrade or add infrastructure to make the electric system more resilient to major weather events. For St. Croix, these efforts include replacing above-ground electrical poles with stronger, more durable composite poles and undergrounding lines in Frederiksted and Christiansted. WAPA also plans to add battery energy storage systems (BESS)/microgrid at Adventure and Estate Richmond, which will each store 10 megawatts or 20 megawatt-hours of electricity.

As of May 2021, 1,453 of the 4,003 (36 percent) electrical poles identified had been replaced with composite poles. In addition, in April 2021, FEMA approved about \$4.5 million for the first phase of the western St. Croix microgrid project at Adventure.

Build on Best Practices and Existing Strategic Recommendations

WAPA has made progress in rebuilding and reinforcing energy infrastructure since 2018 and the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. However, substantial change has yet to occur on a macroscale to increase reliability and affordability of energy on the island. Therefore, most of the energy resilience recommendations contained in the ULI ASPs for Christiansted and St. Thomas are still relevant for VIHA and the USVI. Highlights from those reports that the panel recommends paying particular attention to follow.

Resilient and Green Infrastructure Incentives

As outlined in the previous panel reports, to achieve resilient energy and green infrastructure goals, it is recommended that VIHA and WAPA explore possible incentives for businesses and residents to invest in these approaches. Policy can be a great tool to encourage behavior changes that ultimately achieve impact, and the panel recommends taking a close look at what policies are in place now, whether they

are working, and what might need to shift to achieve resilient energy goals and targets.

To this, the Frederiksted panel adds that the sponsor should evaluate new opportunities for funding in the U.S. Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. Specifically, this includes energy infrastructure rebates and other incentives for public entities in the Infrastructure Act, and building-level incentives for energy efficiency, renewable energy, and electric vehicle infrastructure for private owners in the Inflation Reduction Act. The panel understands that these federal programs can cut the cost of new renewable energy systems by 30 to 36 percent for qualifying projects.

Key Infrastructure

In this area, previous reports recommended that VIHA should increase distributed power generation (on-site generation and microgrids), mitigate inefficiencies inherent in centralized power systems, and create energy efficiency incentives to reduce demand and save consumers money.

In addition to these recommendations, the Frederiksted panel notes that, at minimum, the grid for USVI should be strengthened to support two-way energy transfer and interconnection with microgrids that include renewable energy and energy storage. Federal incentives through the U.S. Department of Energy exist for microgrid demonstration projects and larger-scale systems that integrate renewable energy and storage. The panel also notes the importance of net metering so individuals can sell excess solar energy back to the grid for a reasonable price.

Renewable Energy

The following highlighted recommendations are from the previous panels conducted in the USVI, to which the Frederiksted panel has added its input, as noted.

- With CDBG-DR funding, VIHA may be able to install solar power on low- and moderate-income housing. In doing so across various subdivisions and communities, VIHA can potentially become a power-producing entity and create storage-ready systems. Initially, VIHA will feed power back to the grid. By formulating a power purchase agreement with the local utility, VIHA could sell solar-produced energy to WAPA.
- During a storm, the VIHA system could decouple from the WAPA grid and become a microgrid within the housing communities, thereby creating resilience not only within each community but for the whole island.

- Getting community buy-in for installing renewable energy–based emergency power systems across new housing developments, existing critical facilities such as hospitals and senior housing facilities, and communal institutions such as community centers and schools through a program like Solarize St. Thomas would support and amplify the existing initiative, allowing more residents of the USVI to use clean and renewable energy sources.
- Ensure that new construction uses new solar photovoltaic (PV) panel mounting methods (“PV net”), in which solar panels are mounted onto roofing.

To this, the current panel adds that funding for renewable energy is available through the Inflation Reduction Act. When assessing opportunities for renewable energy, the panel recommends coupling these projects with energy efficiency improvements, especially to existing multifamily buildings. Doing so will decrease overall energy demand, resulting in greater resilience and a need for less solar energy, which is more cost-effective.

Project-Based Energy Diversification

USVI-wide goals and system upgrades planned by WAPA may take years to fully complete. Therefore, in addition to the renewable energy–focused recommendations previously discussed, the panel recommends that VIHA continue to focus on project-based opportunities for energy diversification that can impact the affordability and reliability of electricity for its residents. At the same time, the panel encourages VIHA to continue to work with WAPA and other USVI agencies such as VIEDA on its Vision 2040 plan so that VIHA’s efforts can be integrated into these longer-range projects and plans.

Specifically, the panel recommends the following:

- Consider VIHA project-based battery generators/energy hubs that help to support the grid and address outages.
- Integrate passive cooling techniques and renewable energy sources at a project level to reduce the cost burden of energy on VIHA residents.
- Work with VIEDA on Vision 2040 and the in-progress Energy Sector Analysis to ensure that project-level efforts can be integrated into broader, islandwide planning.
- Add solar and energy storage systems to critical infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, and possibly select community centers to make them more resilient

and able to become an energy “island” in the case of prolonged power outages. In addition to diesel generators as a backup, the panel recommends battery backups powered by solar, which are more reliable after a major weather event when access to diesel or propane may be a challenge. The panel also recommends that hotels and other financeable private sectors explore this option. Backups at these locations could be hooked into the larger grid once the infrastructure capable of handling this distributed energy generation and storage has been fully built out on St. Croix.

Embrace the Opportunity for Resilience: Placement of Key Infrastructure

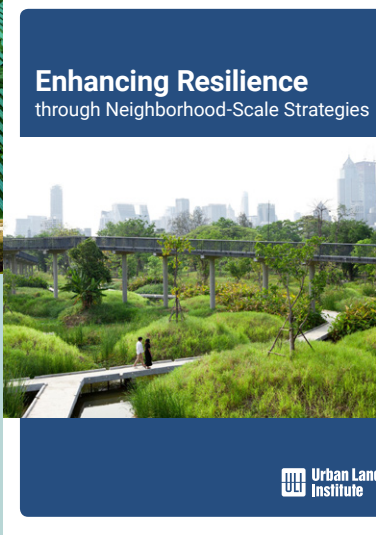
Infrastructure upgrades for St. Croix and the Virgin Islands are imperative, given the effects of climate change on the frequency and intensity of hurricanes, storm surges, and urban flooding, as well as general sea-level rise in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The placement of key infrastructure for resilience is critical. It is important to locate vital community infrastructure in a place that can resist hurricanes and sea-level rise to make sure that communities are not displaced.

A logical starting point is to align with WAPA and other major infrastructure providers to continue to reposition infrastructure to address sea-level rise, hurricanes, urban flooding, and the impacts of climate change in the future. This includes continuing to explore coastal protection such as breakwaters as well as the role that softscape parks and recreation spaces play in mitigating storm surges and increasing permeable surfaces. The panel also recommends that when siting new energy infrastructure projects, VIHA should use the best available data from NOAA on sea-level rise and inland flooding and explore private data providers.

Additional climate-resilient strategies consist of leveraging technology where possible to monitor air quality, wind direction and speed, and local microclimate. Climate-forward technology solutions relevant to St. Croix also include improving water management systems by deploying permaculture methodologies, greenway water management, and water recovery methods. The panel also recommends exploring offshore wind. If sited correctly, this approach could have the best return on investment of all renewable energy investments the USVI can make and could provide enough power for an entire community, whereas solar will likely account for no more than 10 to 20 percent.

ULI RESILIENCE REPORTS

These ULI reports released in 2022 provide action plans related to resilience relevant to VIHA's energy and resilient development goals.





PANEL SPONSOR



Community Voices

SINCE 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has helped communities worldwide find strategic, practical solutions for the most challenging issues facing today's urban, suburban, and rural areas. Serving as a panel of experts, ULI members provide clear, innovative solutions to kick-start critical conversations and help communities gain fresh insight and move forward to improve the lives of their people. A key part of the Advisory Services process involves hearing from the community through stakeholder interviews. Over its weeklong visit, the panel hears from 80 to 120 local stakeholders and gains key insights.





During the June 2022 panel in St. Croix, ULI engaged in additional efforts to celebrate the contributions of the community members who shared their experiences with the panel through a community portrait project. Participants were given the opportunity to have a portrait taken by a professional photographer and share their thoughts about the panel and their lives in St. Croix. The portrait project is an example of what community engagement can look like in St. Croix. The success of the project highlights the need for more engagement and the community's desire for more regular engagement from USVI institutions.





Community Engagement

IN THE PROCESS of conducting truly inclusive and effective engagement, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. There is documented resident resistance to the premise of the “community meeting.” These are often held at inconvenient locations at times that are not conducive to working families, and often are not amenable to children. However, there is tremendous value in leveraging an existing network of meeting places and naturally occurring gathering spaces, allowing for effective communication at events where people already convene. The places can include bars, cafés, and restaurants; beauty salons and barbershops; PTA meetings; and festivals and major social events.

Using these venues as opportunities to connect with VIHA's desired populations shows sincerity in getting to know the residents, as well as the compassion to engage them in a setting comfortable for them. In addition, because the destination is already a part of its day, that household does not have to make special arrangements or change its plans for the sole purpose of engaging with VIHA. As VIHA makes residents' needs and activities primary, such consideration helps establish a relationship between the parties. The panel believes that the selected audience will genuinely appreciate these forms of informal engagement. In addition, pop-up discussion opportunities at existing events are a low-cost, low-risk, high-reward option.

Listening tours and town halls can be successful, and the panel understands that the latter are especially popular. With that in mind, the panel encourages continued use of this popular meeting format, which can be especially effective when garnering large amounts of feedback as well as communicating information to a large mass audience. For the Frederiksted community, not only will diversifying the methods be incredibly important but also prioritizing methods that are used most by its residents. Given the literacy challenges that exist, using various methods of engagement will be necessary in addition to the in-person ones already cited. Radio is used extensively throughout the island and should be used widely for messaging. Local TV stations can also play a role.

VIHA must be mindful to include all the tools available, such as technology and social media. Given that people tend to live on their phones and use them to conduct various forms of business, the dissemination of information and promotion of events via social media is a sound decision to reach residents. VIHA can share information quickly and widely, and as many times as necessary, at a minimal cost. In addition, VIHA can tailor and time the release of messaging to coincide with any programmed in-person activities.

Another tool is the virtual meeting, which has taken the entire world by storm since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now ubiquitous as an engagement tool, the panel recommends this form of engagement as a secondary one, given the gaps in broadband infrastructure and the high cost of electricity across the island. When there are complications

with its use, or if residents cannot use this method at all, it can often be seen as exclusionary, rather than inclusive. VIHA can also maximize all the available capacity of the mobile phone. In addition to being the primary venue for social media, VIHA can maximize “push” technology to communicate via text message. Regardless of whether one possesses a smartphone or not, all mobile phones today receive texts. As such, this medium represents another easy way to ensure information is shared widely.

As VIHA uses any of the methods discussed it is vitally important that the methods employed cater to the specific audience. This allows effective, inclusive, and true engagement and will lead to solutions that reflect the community and can be readily accepted and championed by the residents VIHA serves.



Best Practices for Community and Resident Wellness and Empowerment

BRIGHT PATH is a comprehensive and ambitious resident services plan adopted by VIHA to promote opportunity and independence for VIHA residents through a combination of targeted programming and community partnerships. VIHA's Office of Resident Wellness and Empowerment is responsible for designing, directing, evaluating, and fostering ongoing innovation of the data-driven service delivery model. With a consistent focus on the needs of VIHA families, Resident Wellness and Empowerment staff, partners, and volunteers work collaboratively to foster thriving environments, engage residents, and deliver consistent, scalable programs that yield meaningful outcomes. Through Bright Path, a targeted strategy grounded in best practices, and the use of strengths-based, self-empowerment approaches, the comprehensive support services program promotes health and wellness, housing stability, economic mobility, and personal self-sufficiency for all residents.

The panel understands there has been limited direct engagement with residents on this plan and the eight dimensions of wellness in the Bright Path model. A key next step is to socialize this plan with the residents and prioritize and/or rank-order the eight dimensions, defining what each of the eight dimensions means to them. Residents know best what is important to them and what they need. It is critical to understand which ideas are more or less important to them. Resident needs should drive where VIHA invests or allocates its resources in implementing this plan.

Measure Success

One key question VIHA asked the panel is how they will measure success: What are the key metrics? The panel saw a list of expected outcomes of the Bright Path program but did not see any metrics. Because of this, the panel recommends developing a robust learning and evaluation framework. Key objectives to keep in mind are as follows:

- Collect and analyze data that can inform VIHA and its partners about the progress and results of the social impact strategy.

- Refine the ongoing Bright Path strategy’s implementation to maximize impact.
- Inform VIHA funders and the broader field about the innovations and results of the Bright Path strategy.
- Build the capacity of VIHA and its partners to sustain the learning and evaluation process over time.

Evaluate Design

Evaluation has two components: an outcome evaluation and a process evaluation. Understanding the difference between these two is crucial to successfully measure VIHA’s work.

An outcome evaluation describes what change occurred among the target population or entity because of a program or initiative. It answers the question, “What short-, medium-, and long-term changes were achieved?” The central research question for the outcome evaluation is “What outcomes has VIHA’s Bright Path strategy generated?” The primary outcome question being investigated within each of the levels of analysis is described below.

Sample Outcome Questions

Individual and household level: Has VIHA promoted housing stability and resident wellness and empowerment at the individual and household levels?

Housing community level: Has VIHA promoted social cohesion and a strong sense of community within its properties?

Property level: How have VIHA assets performed, and has the Bright Path strategy had a positive influence?

Organizational level: How is the operating culture shifting at VIHA and its partners toward aspirational and empowering mixed-income housing development and management?

Systems level: Does VIHA influence specific changes in systems and policies?

A process evaluation tells the story of the activities and efforts of a program or initiative. It focuses on numbers and characteristics of those served, numbers and types of services provided, and other fundamental descriptors of the initiative activities. It answers the question, “What happened in the program or initiative?”

Sample Process Questions

What has been the process by VIHA and its partners of implementing the social impact strategy, and what has been learned?

How is the Bright Path strategy being rolled out?

What are the key elements of the strategy?

What are roles and responsibilities, and how are they evolving?

What key strategic decisions are being made?

What course corrections are being made?

What lessons are learned about implementation along the way?

Collect Data

There are multiple different potential modes of data collection. Document review includes a systematic review and coding of organizational and project documents. This includes, but is not limited to, meeting notes, background documents from key partners, administrative documents, regular reports, job descriptions, marketing documents, performance reviews, and maintenance records. Another source of data is administrative data. This is any data gathered in the routine course of existing property and service operations.

Other sources of data are observations. This can take the form of structured observation of formal and informal activities and property use. It may also include observation by VIHA and consultant team members, as well as observation by property staff and residents.

Finally, two other sources of data are key. Surveying includes data collection through resident and staff quick-response activities. Related, but different, interviews and focus groups are individual or group structured conversations.

Analyze Change at Various Levels

The Bright Path model and its related strategies could be assessed at six levels of analysis:

- Individual: resident and household outcomes in VIHA properties;
- Housing community: social relations among VIHA residents, and between residents and staff;

- Property: property performance;
- Organizational: organizational processes at VIHA and its partners;
- Neighborhood: contextual changes in the neighborhoods around VIHA (for future evaluation); and
- Systems: systems-level changes influenced by VIHA (for future evaluation).

Documenting change at the first four levels should be prioritized in the early stages of the evaluation. Change at the neighborhood and systems levels, which are longer-term processes, could be assessed in later evaluation stages.

Within the human capacity- and wealth-building areas, sample performance metrics may include the following:

- Residents achieve personal growth.
- Residents have access to effective services and support.
- Residents earn a family-supporting, livable wage.
- Residents retain employment and have career advancement.
- Residents have savings, are building wealth, and are actively preparing for homeownership or entrepreneurship.
- Increased civic engagement.
- Increased health and wellness.

Incorporate Inclusive Property Management

As noted in the Bright Path Plan, the relationship between the company providing property management services and resident services is the key to success both in the short and long terms. The panel recommends an inclusive property management approach.

Inclusive property management is a people-first approach or human-centered approach to property management. It prioritizes intentionality of respect, support, and engagement of all residents in addition to excellent maintenance of a high-quality building and grounds. Example performance metrics of inclusive property management include resident

satisfaction with property management and whether residents have a sense of power and influence in the building and local community.

WHY AN INCLUSIVE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT APPROACH?

- The quality of life at an individual property is heavily influenced by the relationships between staff and residents.
- Property management teams cannot deliver timely, good-quality, and crisis-free services and effective support without positive relationships with residents.
- Residents cannot feel safe and welcomed without feeling connected and invited to voice their perspectives about the place they call home.
- Unfortunately, because of a complex set of historic and current factors, the ideal of positive relationships and shared problem solving between staff and residents is often not achieved.

Next Steps

To take advantage of the preceding insights, it is critical that VIHA prioritize next steps. First, the panel recommends that VIHA incorporate a clear, inclusive property management vision and process for VIHA communities into the Bright Path document and strategy. This must prioritize resident retention, respect and dignity for all residents, and resident voice and self-agency. Second, VIHA must engage property management partners who have a demonstrated commitment to inclusive property management. This includes building strategic working relationships between VIHA staff and property management partners. Third, VIHA must review and modify all standard operating procedures to incorporate inclusive property management best practices. Best practices can be found in organizations such as the Community Builders (TCB) and Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH).



Partnerships and Governance

A NEW APPROACH to public-sector leadership for housing and economic development is warranted. The breadth and intersectoral nature of the needs facing VIHA come at a moment of extraordinary opportunity for the Virgin Islands. In the past five years, the Virgin Islands has experienced unprecedented tragedy—first with Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 and then the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to the present. Each of these disasters was followed by unprecedented federal support for disaster recovery through FEMA, CBDG-DR, CARES, ARPA, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. These include up to \$8 billion in Hurricane Disaster Recovery funds, nearly \$900 million in COVID-19 funding, and a yet to be determined amount from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Although funds are subject to competing priorities and restrictions, they will provide hundreds of millions of dollars for investment in the territory's housing, infrastructure, and economic development.

During its visit to St. Croix, the panel learned that VIHFA is without permanent leadership. Many of the conditions that ULI had identified in 2018 and 2019 remain today. These include a lack of coordination of policy and priorities among government agencies, skepticism of VIHA in particular by community residents in Frederiksted, lack of engagement as a fundamental principle and approach, and lack of transparency and effective communications with government, community, and resident stakeholders.

Creating a Chief Housing Officer Position

The preceding factors create an opportunity and imperative for a new way for the USVI's housing agencies, and potentially economic development agencies to do business with one another and the public. Multiple agencies, each of which sets policy, plans and implements projects and programs, and consults with stakeholders and the community, often compete for resources. These agencies include VIHA, VIHFA (which also plans, finances, and

develops affordable housing), VIEDA, PFA (USVI Public Finance Authority), and ODR (USVI Office of Disaster Recovery). To compound this issue, the governor's cabinet does not have a single director or commissioner for housing, let alone for the intersection of housing, workforce development, and economic development.

Therefore, the panel recommends creation of the position "chief housing officer" within the governor's cabinet, and potentially expanding this role to include housing, workforce development, and economic development (e.g., chief housing and development officer). This officer's chief responsibilities should be setting policy, strategic planning, prioritization of resources, and oversight of existing agencies (especially VIHA, VIHFA, and VIEDA). The "ambassadorial" functions would include leading engagement with the legislature and community on behalf of the governor and the cluster of agencies. A dedicated chief housing officer would also lead a small Office of Policy Advisers, connecting the policy-setting and prioritization functions under one roof. This arrangement would create an opportunity for a concerted effort to capture more of the economic benefit and wealth-creation opportunities associated with the Redevelopment Plan and other capital spending for USVI residents.

Consistent with the recommendations of the 2019 report, the portfolio of agencies that might report to this officer could include VIHA, VIHFA, VIEDA, the Port Authority, the Bureau of Economic Research, PFA, and ODR. This organizational change could also lead to increased organizational capacity. Examples of better organizational capacity include creating a streamlined new Office of Housing, Workforce, and Economic Development and filling vacancies at VIHA with qualified professionals able to complete VIHA's ambitious plan. Organizational change in a future VIHA must focus on implementing its mission, including partnering for delivery of the Redevelopment Plan (capital), and engaging with community in a coordinated way through the chief housing officer. It also includes ensuring the quality standards of housing conditions across all its properties as well as providing community services to VIHA residents and connecting them with economic opportunities.

Adopting New Models for Public/Private Partnership

VIHA has already embraced the need for public/private partnerships in its Redevelopment Plan and has selected three private developers to lead its portfolio of rebuilding and rehabilitation of housing projects on St. Croix.

EXAMPLES IN ACTION

In 2022, New York City appointed a chief housing officer to oversee the city's housing agencies, including New York City Housing Authority, Housing Recovery and Housing Development Corporation, and its affordable housing strategy. This chief housing officer also oversees the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations and the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants.

Atlanta and San Antonio are likewise creating a chief housing officer position. In a similar yet slightly different vein, Newark, New Jersey, has a deputy mayor and director of economic and housing development.

The Ideal Candidate Will

- Possess executive leadership skills and the ability to bring people together united toward common goals.
- Excel in community engagement, possessing significant experience in stakeholder engagement processes along with a proven track record developing strategic partnerships and building trust with the community.
- Have demonstrated experience in the development of new programs and interpretation of policy guidelines.
- Be mission driven, having a passion for issues related to housing, homelessness and poverty.
- Possess a strong background in forward-thinking housing and homelessness best practices and programs.
- Synthesize diverse stakeholders' points of view with a sensitivity to community culture.

Key attributes

Activator - Strong ability to initiate ideas, thoughts and concepts into action and end results.

Collaborator - Proactively and transparently engages community and city stakeholders in the spirit of partnership toward common goals.

Excellent Communicator - Ability to both listen to stakeholders and communicate priorities and programs to the community.

Visionary - Envisions the housing needs of all San Antonians for future generations to come.

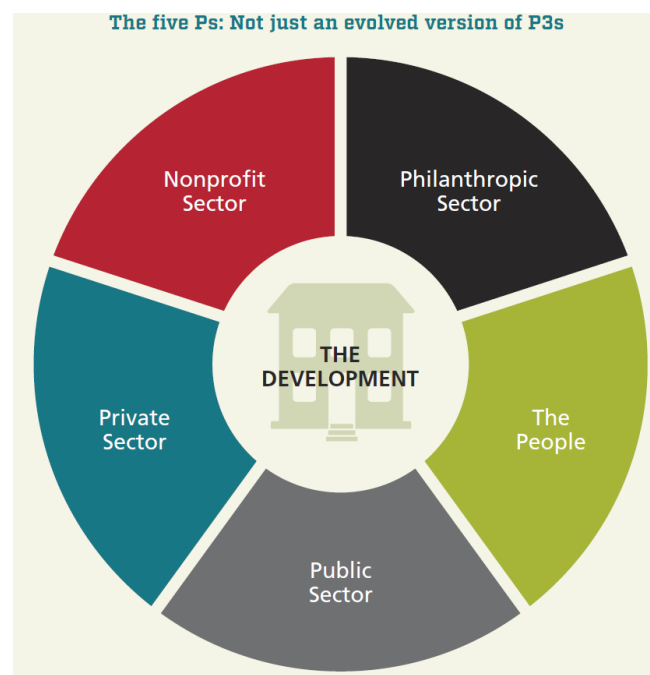
Position description for San Antonio's chief housing officer from a recent job posting.

Although many aspects of this public/private partnership have been established, opportunities exist to make these partnerships more effective and inclusive. VIHA has a phased approach to redeveloping the 3,000 units in its portfolio, but it has already fallen behind schedule in delivering these essential improvements to its residents and their surrounding communities. The panel also heard skepticism about VIHA's plans (such as the rumor that Marley Houses will be sold to create private condominiums).

ULI's publication *Successful Public/Private Partnerships: From Principles to Practice* identifies several important lessons to address these constraints (learn more: <https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Successful-Public-Private-Partnerships.pdf>). One of the lessons that is particularly applicable to VIHA is that increasingly public/private partnerships are evolving beyond a single public entity and private partner to include five Ps: public, private, people, philanthropy, and nonprofit sectors. The panel recommends that for all of its Redevelopment Plan, and particularly for the three projects in Frederiksted, VIHA and its selected private developers more thoroughly engage with both the resident councils and the Frederiksted community at large. This is necessary to more fully understand their priorities for these future homes, including design excellence, comfort, health, community, and well-being.

In addition to the implementation of the Redevelopment Plan itself, VIHA's vision is connecting quality housing to providing greater quality of life and economic opportunities for its residents, the town of Frederiksted, and the people of the USVI. A more coordinated approach to housing and economic development in the territory would ensure coordinated planning and leverage the substantial public and private investment in the Redevelopment Plan to create lasting and more widely spread benefits.

A coordinated approach would include multiple fronts. The first would be working in concert with the downtown Frederiksted revitalization plan. This includes coordinating with plan proponents and VIEDA for small business attraction and formation as well as connecting VIHA residents with opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurship in their communities. A second aspect that a coordinated approach would greatly help with is successfully applying to the Choice Neighborhood grant program. The opportunity exists for deeper engagement with VIHA residents and the Frederiksted community to plan and implement additional amenities, including a broader array of housing types, respect for the



Success depends on collaboration.

historic fabric of Frederiksted, preservation and enhancement of culture, and access to food. These are all components that make a successful Choice Neighborhood application. Finally, coordinating more closely with the Port Authority could reap large dividends. Particularly with the expected return of weekly cruise ships to enhance economic opportunities for Frederiksted residents and all Cruzans, real opportunity exists for economic development.

Although specific opportunities for economic development are beyond the panel's scope, the panel believes that many of these opportunities will lend themselves to public/private partnerships. The government of St. Croix should consider assessing its assets, particularly its landholdings, as a means of attracting private investment and local economic empowerment. Furthermore, it should assess all government investments, especially in housing and infrastructure, as opportunities for attracting private investment. In addition, the government should assess the location of government services and offices (many of which used to be in Frederiksted) as a means of attracting private investment and revitalization to the city. One successful example of this strategy is the revitalization of the Anacostia Waterfront in Washington, D.C. This transformation was catalyzed by the decision to relocate the U.S. Department of Transportation headquarters to land previously occupied by the U.S. Navy Yard, along with vigorous and sustained public/private partnership and coordination.

Leveraging Housing Investments as a Catalyst

Throughout its history and continuing to the present, the colonial legacy of the territory has meant that St. Croix's resources have been exploited for others' gain and that when large-scale investments are made on the island (such as those related to disaster recovery today), the wealth-creation benefits are too often exported outside the territory. The island must more successfully leverage investments in housing and infrastructure as a catalyst for economic opportunity.

Given the unprecedented level of investment in the \$1 billion Redevelopment Plan and its connection to billions more in disaster recovery relief and new infrastructure investment, VIHA and its government partners must focus on creating a cycle of opportunity and an ecosystem of empowerment for Cruzans and USVI residents. The scale of these investments means that the territory will need to tap into some mainland expertise and implementation capacity, but it should be done in a way that maximizes opportunities for USVI residents and businesses, and potentially attracts Virgin Islanders in the diaspora back to the islands.

The panel recommends that VIHA and territory leadership explore multiple examples of these opportunities. Business development assistance for local contractors and vendors in design, engineering services, and construction creates a cycle of investment and development. This requires understanding the barriers for local contractors, such as insurance and bonding, and finding approaches to overcome these hurdles. VIHA and territory leadership (e.g., VIEDA and the Procurement Office) should also consult with local vendors and entrepreneurs about what forms of business development assistance and skills training are most needed to boost local capacity.

Another example is procurement preferences for locally owned and located contractors and subcontractors. One example is Washington, D.C.'s Certified Business Entity program (learn more: <https://dslbd.dc.gov/getcertified>). A related but different example is first-source hiring practices for public contractors, which require good-faith efforts toward employing economically disadvantaged residents for entry-level positions on applicable projects. These practices are used in Washington, D.C., Newark, and San Francisco, among other locations. Finally, apprenticeship programs for government contracts and public/private partnership contracts are essential.

Above and beyond those already listed, one of the greatest opportunities for capacity building and wealth creation in the Virgin Islands would be to reverse the historic "brain drain" where educated and working-age Virgin Islanders disproportionately leave the territory for the mainland United States to pursue education and work. A significant bulwark against this out-migration pattern would be proactive marketing, incentives, and support resources encouraging recent generations of the USVI diaspora to return to the territory to work.

IRELAND PRECEDENT

Ireland runs a robust effort to recruit its citizens abroad to return to Ireland. This includes advice on travel, residency requirements, housing, education, employment, health care, retirement, and entrepreneurship. For more detailed information, see https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/returning_to_ireland/overview_of_returning_to_ireland.html.

A further potential incentive program worth exploring is student loan forgiveness. This would be for Virgin Islanders who moved to the mainland to get college or professional degrees and commit to return home to work or establish a business for a set number of years. This program could be modeled on the federal Public Service Student Loan Forgiveness Program, but potentially apply to private-sector jobs or entrepreneurship opportunities on the Virgin Islands for people who can prove their or their families' prior residency.



Economic Freedom

FREDERIKSTED'S ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT has a passionate and productive history. The panel believes this spirit should be nurtured, encouraged, and given room to grow. Infrastructure to establish, strengthen, and support small businesses, especially those of native Cruzans, should be created. Several successful models to emulate exist, one of which is Motor City Match (MCM) in Detroit.

Motor City Match

MCM was founded in 2015 to help start new, permanent businesses and expand existing businesses in Detroit's commercial corridors by providing tailored assistance throughout the launch and growth process. Winning entrepreneurs looking to start or expand their business in Detroit must locate in the city of Detroit for at least three years, provide verification of new jobs created or existing jobs retained, and demonstrate a benefit to the community.

Program Objectives

To date, MCM has awarded over \$9 million in grants to more than 1,500 Detroit small businesses. The program has five overarching goals:

- Create economic mobility for Detroiters through entrepreneurship, thereby increasing incomes and growing wealth.
- Distribute program resources equitably by focusing on low-to-moderate income Detroiters and underserved entrepreneurs.
- Create jobs for low- to moderate-income Detroiters and underserved communities.
- Increase access to capital for minority and women-owned businesses.
- Eliminate blight by reactivating currently vacant space.

Several key aspects illustrate how MCM accomplishes these goals. The first step is to get businesses formalized, incorporated, and to a transactional stage early on. Next is helping businesses find the space appropriate to their model. Helping guide businesses through these legal and logistical hurdles with speed gets revenue flowing into the businesses' hands sooner, decreasing the likelihood of failure.

Establishing lines of communication between awardee businesses and partners is essential, as well as providing subject-specific workshops and need-based technical assistance. The final key to the puzzle is facilitating loans from community lenders by focusing on capital readiness, as well as providing gap funding through grants of up to \$100,000.

Program Accomplishments

MCM accomplishes its goals in numerous ways. One is classes and seminars. In these sessions, participants hone skills and knowledge in the development of their idea and company. It also helps prepare them for difficult and strategic decisions. Another method is architectural support. This design track provides business owners with architectural and construction consultation from licensed professionals, helping them strategize their buildout. Related but different is MCM's technical assistance. Technical assistance awards may take the form of plan, develop, and design track awards. These awards offer business services, architectural design services, one-on-one consulting, and group classes and seminars. Technical assistance awards do not include any direct cash assistance to awardees. Instead, the program reimburses qualified technical assistance providers directly for services provided to awardees. MCM connects awardees to business services provided by qualified professionals, such as legal services, accounting and financial planning, marketing, branding, web/digital services, and others.

Building owners with commercial space also can play a crucial role. Owners with space available for lease can apply to be listed on the Make-a-Match Map. To be listed, a property must be up to date on all city and state taxes, be current on water bills, and have no outstanding blight tickets. Buildings listed on the Make-a-Match Map will relate to the MCM businesses looking for space; buildings that match with a tenant will be eligible to apply for MCM design or cash awards.

Money is one of the most significant barriers to entry for emerging businesses. MCM helps in this regard with gap

funding grants. MCM's cash track award connects awardees with appropriate lenders and available capital, then offers grant funding to fill the remaining financial gap. The cash track award offers gap funding grants of up to \$100,000. Cash track awardee businesses must contribute a minimum of 10 percent of the total project costs in equity investment. Financial assistance award grants will not exceed 50 percent of total project costs. After 19 rounds, MCM has served 1,540 businesses with \$9.1 million in grant funds. The makeup of those businesses is 64 percent owned by Detroiters, 81 percent minority-owned businesses, and 71 percent woman-owned businesses.

A program based on the MCM could serve as an important catalyst for Cruzan entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs-to-be. There is direct relevance between the problems MCM has confronted and those USVI currently faces. The implementation of technical, financial, and design assistance would solidify the small business community in Frederiksted. It could also assist in the empowerment of the community, providing job opportunities, as well as the revitalization and habitation of buildings along the commercial corridors.

Tourism-Supporting Economic Development

The panel believes that St. Croix can be more systematic about how it leverages existing tourism activity. To do so, St. Croix needs to differentiate itself from other USVI and Caribbean tourism destinations. One major area is leveraging historic and cultural assets for tourism. The panel recommends the following near-term strategies that can help St. Croix leverage existing opportunities with very little effort:

- Conduct historic and cultural asset mapping in Frederiksted that includes existing and planned assets and "experience" destinations (water tours, mountain hikes, rainforest exploration, food and beverage tours, etc.).
- Develop specialized cultural and heritage tourist offerings that build off existing and planned resources and appeal to the "detourist," a travel model that is increasingly popular among millennials.
- Develop specialized ecotourism packages.
- Develop a professional brand that truly reflects the destination and the authentic opportunities for travelers to immerse themselves in Cruzan culture.

WHAT IS DETOURISM?

Detourism is an approach to travel that promotes slow and sustainable tourism, encouraging travelers to go beyond the usual tourist attractions and destinations and opt for unique experiences authentic to a particular place. One of the main ideas behind detourism is to invite visitors to travel through a place slowly and experience its more authentic and lesser-known parts much as a local does.

The panel sees other specific areas where economic development ideas can flourish. One idea is growing local jobs and industries that further serve the tourism industry. These can range from supporting and advancing VIEDA's agribusiness plans to culinary advancements. Creating and leveraging local entrepreneurship in culinary arts would help support the food and beverage component of the tourism industry (e.g., food truck island and industrial kitchen to expand capacity). This effort would require identifying space for shared commercial kitchens and identifying funding to support the buildout of the commercial kitchen space.



Skills and Career Freedom

ONE OF THE PANEL'S KEY TAKEAWAYS from its engagements with the community was a definitive desire for job opportunities, and perhaps more important, skills and career training. The provision of upskilling for the residents of Frederiksted is necessary, not only for those who choose not to attend college, but also to fill the trades gap on the island. This is a critical need in communities across the nation, and models exist that successfully address this necessity, such as Skills for Life in Detroit.

Skills for Life

Skills for Life is lauded as perhaps the most comprehensive career development and advancement program ever made available to Detroiters. It is a key component in reducing poverty and increasing employment and upward mobility in the city.

Skills for Life is a paid work and training initiative created jointly by the city of Detroit and Detroit at Work to accomplish two goals:

- Provide residents with the training and credentials they need to make at least \$15 per hour; and
- Expand blight removal and other services in Detroit.

Participants are paid five days a week as they split their time between working for the city of Detroit and engaging in education and training activities that lead to obtaining credentials required for better-paying jobs.

If hired by the city of Detroit through the Skills for Life program, a participant will work three days per week on projects that are important to the city. This makes a positive impact in neighborhoods across Detroit. The participant is also paid to attend education or training two days per week to earn a credential that leads to a career. This allows participants to gain valuable experience and skills that they can put on their résumé. In addition, participants can get their high school diploma or GED if they do not already have it. They may also earn a credential needed for in-demand

jobs. Either way, the participant will leave the Skills for Life Program with access to a wider range of jobs.

After the participants complete the education or training program, they graduate from Skills for Life. The city of Detroit then works with the participants to find a full-time job that pays at least \$15 per hour. The participants will be on a career path that allows them to increase their pay to \$20 per hour, \$25 per hour, or even more.

Skills for Life jobs are located at various sites around the city, and training and career services are delivered at a variety of locations in Detroit. Through Skills for Life, the city also will

help the participant with a transportation and child care plan, as well as provide career coaching and other support that increases the participant's long-term success in the program and beyond. In addition, a drug test is not required for this program, no previous experience is required to do the work, and individuals with criminal records are encouraged to apply. Over the next three years, the city of Detroit and Detroit at Work aim to serve up to 2,200 residents through this program.

The transferability of this program to Frederiksted is highly applicable and could be immediate in its impact.



Conclusion

VIHA AND THE CITY OF FREDERIKSTED face multifaceted challenges. In addition, they have multiple, exciting opportunities in front of them. The panel strongly believes the contents of this report can help VIHA and the city make Frederiksted the best that it can be. To reinforce the suggestions given here, the panel highlights the following four action items as what VIHA should embark on immediately to achieve these goals:

- Begin to develop organizational and staff capacity.
- Conduct effective and inclusive resident and community engagement.
- Commit to appointing a chief housing officer.
- Prioritize development phasing based on funding availability.

VIHA already has access to the two previous ULI Advisory Services reports and should be commended for beginning to implement some of those recommendations. However, work remains to be done. The panel acknowledges that integrating the recommendations of this report, as well as the previous two, in a cohesive, collaborative manner is no small task. However, this action will support efforts already in place that honor the special environment of Frederiksted and its residents, as well as VIHA's residents at large. The panel believes the city, its residents, VIHA, and its elected officials are up to the challenge.

Appendix: VIHA Action Items

Short-Term Actions

- Take advantage of opportunities to implement Redevelopment Plan now.
- Prioritize development phasing based on funding availability.
- Amplify Frederiksted's strengths and brand to attract private investment, and seek opportunities to engage impact investors.
- Define Bright Path success metrics.
- Acknowledge gaps in capacity, and develop organizational and staff capacity.
- Provide technical assistance training in specialized disaster recovery and/or access to FEMA experts as part of a fellowship or capacity-building grant.
- Solicit services for subject matter experts who have experience with federal funding.
- Engage a professional recruiter to assist in identifying qualified talent both locally and abroad
- Commit to appointing a chief housing officer.
- Adopt best practices for equity and inclusion.
- Conduct effective and inclusive resident and community engagement, and meet the residents where they are.
- Incorporate a clear, inclusive property management vision and process for VIHA communities in the Bright Path document and strategy.

Medium-Term Actions

- Create the position chief housing officer within the governor's cabinet, and potentially expand this role to include housing, workforce development, and economic development.
- Determine a strategy to build more organizational and staff capacity in both VIHA and VIHFA.
- Develop financing mechanisms that provide short-term/bridge solutions to lessen the reliance on federal funding.
- Leverage investments in housing and infrastructure as a catalyst for economic opportunity.
- Incorporate a mixed-income model in VIHA communities.

Long-Term Actions

- Explore a comprehensive career development and advancement program for residents. Seek opportunities to promote and support economic freedom, tourism-supporting economic development, and skills and career freedom for VIHA residents and Cruzans as a whole
- Leverage implementation of the housing plan to create impact beyond the site's boundaries and create centers of activity.
- Proactively market, provide incentives, and support resources encouraging recent generations of the USVI diaspora to return to the territory to work.

Ongoing Actions

- Make an intentional effort to pursue an integrated approach to housing.
- Strengthen coordination and collaboration with similar entities (VIHFA, VIEDA, etc.).
- Integrate resilience into all redevelopment decisions.
- Along with selected private developers, thoroughly engage with both the resident councils and the Frederiksted community at large. Require developers to incorporate meaningful resident education and engagement into development decisions.
- Seek out best practices for VIHA and engage in peer-to-peer learning from organizations such as the National Association of Local Housing Finance Agencies, National Development Council, or National Council of State Housing Agencies.

About the Panel

Tyrone Rachal

Panel Chair
Atlanta, Georgia

Rachal is president of Urban Key Capital Partners, which is a mission-driven, specialty finance, advisory services platform with expertise in providing a range of financial services to highly impactful real estate development projects in distressed communities and development authorities. He is also a principal of Red Rock Global and president of Red Rock Global Capital Partners, where he has specific responsibility for directing all financial advisory services and private placement activity.

Before forming Urban Key Capital Partners and rejoining Red Rock Global, Rachal was managing director of redevelopment at Invest Atlanta. He had specific responsibility for managing, marketing, and overseeing the city of Atlanta's tax allocation district program and served as director for commercial, retail, and mixed-use projects applying for tax increment finance funding. Rachal also created and had the responsibility of directing Invest Atlanta's controlling entity interest as president of Atlanta Emerging Markets Inc., a New Markets Tax Credit program Certified Community Development Entity (CDE) and multi-round allocatee (\$308 million). Because of this specialized track record, Rachal recently launched Urban Key CDE to compete for NMTC allocation from the Department of Treasury Community Development Financial Institutions Fund.

Rachal joined Invest Atlanta from Red Rock Global, which is an Atlanta-based real estate advisory services and commercial brokerage company he cofounded in 2001. Before that, Rachal served with the Private Equity Group of Merrill Lynch & Co. in New York where he had the responsibility of advising financial sponsors in the private placement of over \$7 billion of limited partnership interests to institutional investors. He also served in the Mergers & Acquisitions Group at Merrill Lynch & Co. in New York where he provided advisory assistance to Fortune 500 companies and financial sponsors in over \$5 billion of both acquisitions and divestitures.

Rachal is a graduate of Dartmouth College with degrees in economics and government, as well as of the University of Chicago Law School and Booth School of Business, where he received his JD and MBA degrees, respectively. He

currently serves as vice chair of the advisory board of ULI Atlanta, past chair of the Public/Private Partnership Council of ULI, global governing trustee of ULI and was a participant in ULI Atlanta's Inaugural Center for Regional Leadership Development. Rachal serves on the boards of directors of the Frazer Center, Southface Institute, CaringWorks, Sadie G. Mays Health and Rehabilitation Center, Health 1st Foundation, and Ebenezer Baptist Church. He has also chaired the boards of directors of the Development Authority of DeKalb County (Decide DeKalb), the DeKalb Private Hospital Authority, and the Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly Authority. In addition, Rachal is a graduate of the 2012 Class of Leadership Atlanta, the 2013 Class of Leadership Georgia, and the 2013 Atlanta Regional Commission Leadership Institute.

Dawn Arnold

Atlanta, Georgia

Arnold is executive vice president and chief operating officer at Invest Atlanta and oversees its Community Development, Finance, Information Technology, Human Resources, Operations, and Investment Services departments. Before her current position, Arnold was senior vice president of community development responsible for providing leadership and strategic direction in the successful execution of a shared vision of comprehensive community development, quality affordable housing, and economic growth in the Atlanta's 10 tax allocation districts.

Arnold also served as the managing director of housing finance for five years and was responsible for overseeing the successful implementation of \$650 million in pivotal affordable housing programs, which served to provide viable housing solutions for Atlanta's workforce, seniors, disabled, and individuals confronted with homelessness. During her tenure with Invest Atlanta, Arnold also managed and operated the authority's multifamily and single-family housing bond portfolio of about \$1.8 billion and more than 20,000 units of housing.

Arnold earned a BA in economics from Spelman College and an MBA in International Business from Georgia State University. A graduate of the Leadership Atlanta Class of 2020, she currently serves as president elect of the board of directors for the National Association of Local Housing

Finance Agencies, president/chairwoman of the board of directors of Atlanta Land Trust, president of the Formation Board of the Southwest Atlanta Partnership Inc., mayoral appointee to the City of Atlanta Housing Commission, and is a member of the board of directors of Atlanta Beltline Inc. and the Enterprise Community Partners Advisory Board.

Arnold has been selected as one of ULI's Women Leadership Initiative Leaders 2020, *Atlanta* magazine's 500 Most Powerful Leaders (2021, 2022), Virginia Union University's Community Service Award Honoree (2021), Bisnow 2019 Power Woman, *Rolling Out* magazine's Top 25 Women in Atlanta 2014, ULI Atlanta Center for Leadership Class of 2014, member of Regional Leadership Institute Class of 2015, and Atlanta Business League's Top 100 Women of Influence 2016.

Antoine Bryant

Detroit, Michigan

Bryant is a thought leader and community engagement expert with over 30 years of experience in the planning, design, development, and empowerment of underserved communities across the United States. He has leveraged his extensive community development experience to become an advocate for high-potential communities, leading public engagement efforts throughout the country and abroad.

Bryant currently is director of planning and development for Detroit. He champions the credo of "One Detroit" and is aggressively engaging residents, businesses, and public stakeholders to ensure the continued equitable development of this great American city. His academic and professional background has served as a strong foundation to lead Detroit in its continued ascendancy. In all of Bryant's work, intentional efforts are made at empowering indigenous populations who have undergone various levels of disenfranchisement and ensuring that they have a definitive voice in the improvement and growth of their community.

Nationally, Bryant is on the board of directors for the National Organization of Minority Architects as the director of strategic partnerships. He was appointed to the ACE Mentorship National Board and the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy; and he serves as a health equity co-chair for the International WELL Building Institute. He received his BS in urban and regional studies from Cornell University and MArch from the University of Texas, with study abroad experience in Tokyo, Japan.

Kimberly Driggins

Washington, D.C.

Driggins is the executive director of the Washington Housing Conservancy (WHC). Launched in 2018, WHC preserves affordable workforce housing, prevents displacement, and promotes economic mobility, especially for moderate-to-low-income African Americans and other people of color. WHC is committed to creating thriving, inclusive, mixed-income communities throughout the D.C. region.

Driggins has an extensive background in urban planning and real estate development and before her appointment at WHC, she served as director of strategic planning/arts and culture for the city of Detroit's Planning and Development Department for three years. She also served as associate director for citywide planning for the District of Columbia's Office of Planning from 2008 to 2015.

A nationally recognized expert in urban redevelopment and placemaking, Driggins has innovative projects in both Detroit and Washington, D.C. She currently serves on the boards of PennPraxis and the National Landing Business Improvement District, and she was board chairperson for Gehl Institute from 2017 to 2019. She has a BA from Hampton University and an MPP from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. Driggins was awarded the prestigious Loeb Fellowship from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design in 2015.

Eric Rothman

New York, New York

Rothman, chief executive officer of HR&A, brings three decades of experience in providing economic development and public/private real estate development consulting, servicing governmental entities, and advising on transportation and public finance projects across North America and in the United Kingdom. He is chair of the ULI national Public/Private Partnership Council and is a nationally recognized expert in transit-oriented development.

Rothman has led the firm's efforts to redevelop the Capitol Riverfront District and former Walter Reed Hospital sites in Washington, D.C.; St. Paul, Minnesota's historic Union Depot; and 30th Street Station in Philadelphia. He has provided economic development strategies for the cities of New York, Newark, Austin, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles.

Before joining HR&A, he served as director of business planning for Transport for London. In 2008, Rothman was recognized by Real Estate New Jersey as one of its Forty under 40 rising stars. He serves as board treasurer for KaBOOM! and was previously board chair for the Design Trust for Public Space.

Dawveed Scully

Chicago, Illinois

Scully is managing deputy commissioner of planning and development for Chicago. Trained as an architect and urbanist, Scully has a strong passion to make design an essential tool to enhance the lives of everyday people. He has experience working on a variety of projects from vision strategies that create a framework for execution to developing implementation strategies that allow those visions to be realized.

Before joining the city of Chicago, Scully was an associate principal in the urban design and planning studio at Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill in Chicago where he worked for almost 14 years on development around the world, including focus on housing, neighborhood and community planning, transit-oriented development plans, corridor plans, campus planning, inclusive placemaking, and design equity.

His award-winning résumé includes projects such as Detroit East Riverfront, Barangaroo Central, Atlanta University Center, and Robbins Park—projects that all center on equitable and just outcomes in the built environment and that elevate local culture and community, focus on health and wellness, facilitate economic mobility, and create connected and resilient places.

Scully is a graduate and currently an adjunct professor at IIT School of Architecture and featured in *Crain's Chicago Business* 40 under 40 2020, ULI Young Visionary 2018, and Leadership Greater Chicago Class of 2021.

Leon I. Walker

Chicago, Illinois

Over the past 15 years, Walker has spearheaded cutting-edge community development projects that have generated thousands of new jobs and brought grocery stores and health care services into the food and health care deserts on Chicago's south side. As the managing principal of DL3 Realty Advisors, Walker works closely with municipalities, anchor institutions, and Fortune 500 companies to implement projects that are sensitive to a neighborhood's character while creating economic opportunities for local residents. His projects are more than just bricks and mortar; they are designed to provide a stimulus that ultimately lifts economic prospects and quality of life for local residents. During his career, Walker has structured more than \$100 million in New Markets Tax Credits, including the award-winning Roseland Medical Center, which was the first project to finance new construction with NMTCs in Chicago.

Among the other projects he has been involved with are Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois Customer Care Center Chicago, Illinois Englewood Square Shopping Center Chicago, Illinois Jewel-Osco Woodlawn Chicago, Illinois UI Health Miles Square Health Center Chicago, and the Illinois Roseland Medical Center in Chicago. His previous experience includes work with Jones Lang LaSalle Corporate Real Estate Services and Citicorp Securities Real Estate Capital Markets.

Walker received doctor of law and master of business administration degrees from the University of Chicago, and a bachelor of business administration with distinction honors from the University of Michigan.

He is a volunteer at the Greater Chicago Food Depository, a board member of Roosevelt University's Marshall Bennett Institute of Real Estate, and Roseland Community Medical District commissioner.



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