

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Monee' Edwards
Public Information Officer
(340) 777-4432 ext. 4221
(340) 642-3528
media@vihfa.gov
www.vihfa.gov

Contact: Laurissa Ellis
Communications Manager
Office of Disaster Recovery
ldellis@usvipfa.com

**VIHFA Engages HUD Deputy Assistant Secretary in Vital Discussions
During Two-Day Visit to USVI**



St. Croix, US Virgin Islands – Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) Interim Executive Director and Chief Disaster Recovery Officer Dayna Clendinen welcomed HUD Deputy Assistant Secretary for Grant Programs Claudia Monterrosa on a two-day visit aimed at gaining critical updates on ongoing projects and reaffirming the federal government's commitment to supporting the territory's recovery efforts.



Among a series of site visits conducted on Wednesday and Thursday, Ms. Monterrosa learned more about planned construction for Sister Emma Cottage at the Queen Louise Home for Children on St. Croix. This cottage stands as a vital unit, offering intensive 24-hour foster care for those with severe developmental and physical disabilities. Ms. Monterrosa delved into details of this new construction project, hearing about the

proposed plans and fostering discussions on resiliency measures such as back up energy solutions, wind-and-storm safeguards, and flood mitigation features. The dialogue extended to construction logistics, including managing change orders and sourcing unique items like specialized windows. The anticipated completion of this rebuilding is March 2025, about 12 months from its proposed start.

A tour of the ongoing Walter IM Hodge Pavilion rehabilitation – a collaborative effort between the Virgin Islands Housing Authority, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and VIHFA - also offered a firsthand look at the impact of the territory's recovery efforts as general contractor MDG Designs introduced Darius Alfred - a New York resident with Crucian roots brought back to contribute to the project. MDG Designs President Michael Rooney noted



Mr. Alfred's comprehensive involvement in the rehabilitation, underscoring the transformative nature of collective efforts in rebuilding infrastructure and fostering community renewal



In additional meetings between HUD, VIHFA, and the Office of Disaster Recovery, the agencies discussed program achievements, upcoming projects, and grant opportunities, among them the ongoing implementation of HUD's Mitigation grant. In her presentation, IED Clendinen highlighted the year's successes, emphasizing shared goals, outlined priorities, and collaborative efforts to drive results, including:

- conducting education and outreach to subrecipients and contractors;
- creating and retaining low-to-moderate income jobs through the programs; and
- supporting projects and investments that will not only meet all local and federal requirements, but are also viable;

"In just the past year, we've achieved notable successes," IED Clendinen said. "Our collective vision is intentional, priorities carefully defined, and focus resolutely maintained. Each team member has demonstrated accountability in their respective areas, contributing to the realization of tangible outcomes while also fostering a supportive environment that promotes ongoing training and development."



Ms. Monterrosa and her team expressed enthusiasm for VIHFA's progress, emphasizing the need for sustainable services and understanding long-term project risks. HUD representatives also offered suggestions for streamlining processes.

"I see you are on the right track, with passion and commitment from your team," Ms. Monterrosa praised. "Leadership and collaboration are crucial, and HUD is here to reinforce our support."

Office of Disaster Recovery Director Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien also noted the collaborative efforts and dedication of our collective staff and recovery partners.

"ODR remains steadfast in its commitment to expedite the expenditure of HUD funding through the implementation of innovative strategies and policies. We recognize that there is a lot of work to do, but with a cooperative approach and the continued support of our HUD partners, we will maximize our shared commitment to propel impactful recovery projects and programs. We are grateful for the opportunity to share the status of CDBG-DR with Ms. Monterrosa and her team and look forward to additional opportunities to brainstorm solutions and share information," she said.