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# Today's Agenda



The Town Hall and Open House  
will run about 3 hours in total

*All times are approximate*

01 Open House 4:30 – 5:30PM

02 Presentation 5:30 – 6:00PM

03 Open House Continues 6:00 – 7:30PM

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# US Virgin Islands Comprehensive Land & Water Use Plan (Comp Plan)

## Town Hall Meeting & Open House - St. Thomas

July 18, 2023

Horsley Witten Group



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# Agenda

01 Welcome

02 Refresher

03 Formative Issues

04 How We Make Change

05 Guiding Principles, Policy Directions  
& Working Strategies

06 Open House and Virtual Open House

# 01 Welcome

Greetings from the USVI  
Department of Planning and  
Natural Resources (DPNR).



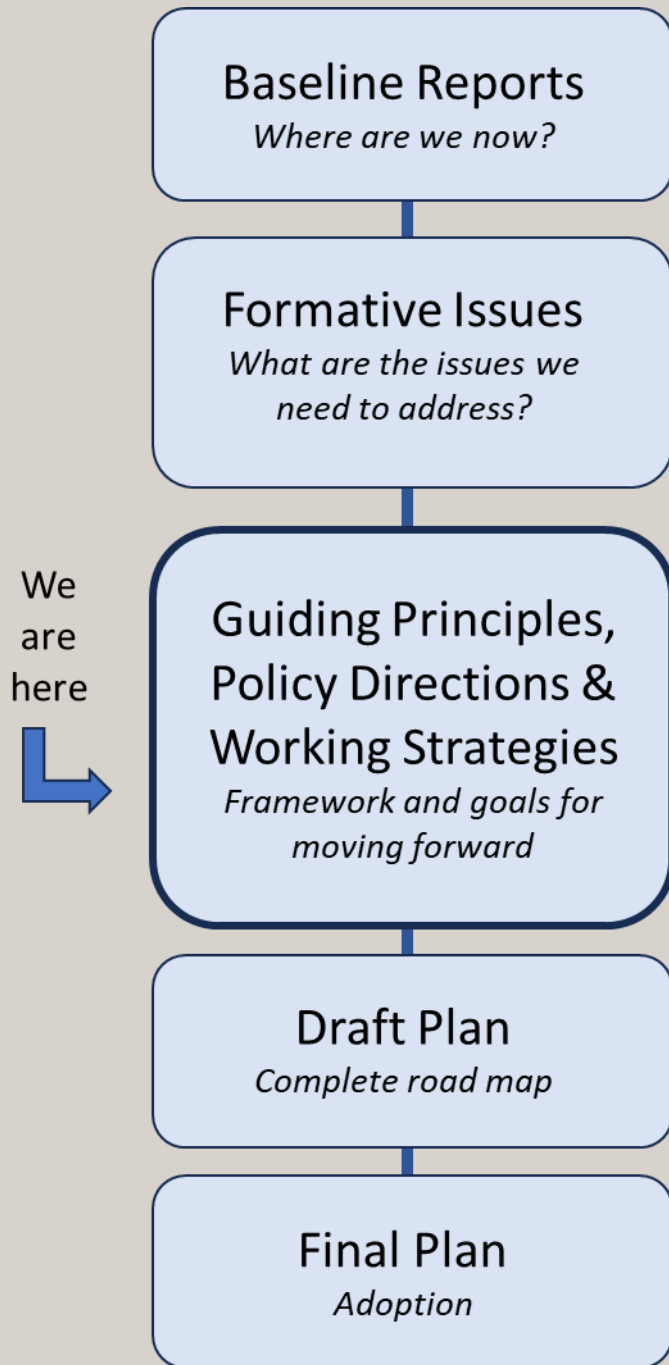
# 02 Refresher



**New 'shorthand' for  
Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan**

**'Comp Plan'**

**Simple and to the point.**



# Refresher: What is the Comp Plan?

The Comp Plan is a shared vision for the USVI's future and a roadmap that guides how we get there. It helps us make decisions about:

- What **new development** looks like and where it happens.
- How we balance **competing uses for our waters** such as boating, fishing, swimming, etc.
- How to **protect** environmentally sensitive areas, waters, coastlines, and historic sites.
- Prioritizing future investments in **community services** and **infrastructure** that promote fairness and equity.
- Making sure the **land and water use decision making process** is fair, equitable, and consistent.

# 03 Formative Issues





## What we heard from the Formative Issues public survey

- About 30 responses
- Good, substantive comments
- Vast majority supported Formative Issues as-is or with modifications - <2% of responses were not in support
- Most common request for amendment . . .

***Make water uses more prominent!***

# What we heard from the Working Groups

- Supplement surveys with **on-the-ground engagement**
- Focus on **people, culture, heritage**
- Emphasis on government **transparency** and **accountability** as well as **capacity**



*Latest Formative Issues can be reviewed on the project website*

# What we heard from the Working Groups

(continued)

- More opportunities for **local decision-making**  
(particularly heard in St. John)
- Specific environmental concerns – emphasis on **regeneration, sustainability** – both for conservation and development
- More emphasis on **water uses**



*Latest Formative Issues can be reviewed on  
the project website*

# 04 How We Make Change

# How We Make Change

Guidelines for government decision making and implementation . . .

**Set Goals**

**Collect Data**

**Be Accountable**

**Act Equitably**

**Mind the Future**

**Embrace Change**



## Example...

Proposed bill to rehabilitate derelict and abandoned properties without a change of ownership.

Will this be good for the USVI?

How will we know?

Let's try it and find out . . .



## **Set Goals:** Numeric targets? (hypothetical)

- 50% reduction in derelict and abandoned buildings within 10 years.
- 90% of properties remain in their current ownership.

## **Collect Data:** What do we know and want to know?

- Establish a baseline inventory.
- Track investments over time.
- Track property owner data.

## **Be Accountable:** Is it working?

- Number of buildings renovated.
- Number of people able to maintain ownership.
- Where can we make adjustments?

## **Act Equitably:** Who is benefiting?

- Track demographic data of property owners.
- Outcomes for lower-income vs. higher income property owners.
- Outcomes for owners of different race.



## **Mind the Future:** Benefits to future generations?

- Buildings are being “built back better,” (weatherproof, energy efficient).
- Accessible to the next generation.

## **Embrace Change:** Will this work?

- We won't know until we try!
- And test.
- And refine.

*If everything we do embraces these principles, there's nothing we can't do together!*

# OS Guiding Principles, Policy Directions & Working Strategies

## What are “Guiding Principles”?

- *1-2 sentences that summarize each Formative Issue*
- *These can also be thought of as big picture goals*

## What are “Policy Directions”?

- *Statements about what we want to do to reach our goals*





## What are “Working Strategies”?

- *Examples* of strategies that will support each of the Policy Directions
- These come from: Existing Plans, Unadopted Draft Plans and Legislation, Ideas from the Working Groups and the Public
- Specific actions that agencies and individuals will need to take from year to year to make sure the plan is implemented

# Govern Effectively

Decisions related to land and water use should be based on sound planning and enforced by agencies with adequate resources.



## Examples

**Staffing & Training:** Make sure all government agencies are fully staffed and trained and have the resources to do their work and enforce regulations.

**Accountability:** Adopt standards to hold decision-makers accountable to the Comp Plan so that it is consistently implemented from administration to administration.



## Celebrate Our History and Culture

Restoring, healing, preserving, and cultivating awareness of cultural resources in land and water use policy is critical to the economic success of the USVI and cultural experience of future generations.

### Examples

**Mindful Development:** Ensure development accounts for and enhances cultural resources, including using traditional and culturally recognized building and site design.

**Reinvesting in Our History:** Make sure property owners have the tools and financing they need to reinvest in their historic homes and properties.

# Provide Homes for Everyone

A diverse and abundant supply of safe and healthy homes is fundamental to economic, social, and environmental prosperity of the USVI.



## Examples

**Flexible Zoning:** Make sure zoning allows homes to evolve over time to meet changing family needs.

**Probate Reform:** Enable families to continue ownership and investment in their properties and expedite the probate process.



## Connect People, Commerce, and Places

The transportation system should serve the needs of all residents and visitors with different options for getting around, and connect land and water uses in a safe, efficient, and environmentally sensitive way.

## Examples

**Walkability:** Invest in sidewalks and paths that make it easier and safer to walk between neighborhoods, schools, shopping, and other services.

**Sustainable Roadways:** Maintain high quality roadways that minimize stormwater runoff and other negative environmental impacts.



# Protect Natural Resources

Land and water use policies must reflect that USVI's natural resources are central to local cultural identity, public health, ecological systems, and economic well-being.



## Examples

**Development Review:** Review environmental impacts associated with development and water use permits. Land and water management practices should regenerate the environment.

**Groundwater Protection:** Understand where groundwater aquifers are vulnerable and manage land to protect water quality and quantity.



## Improve and Maintain Quality of Life

Land and water use policies should support a sustainable system of public amenities and services that foster civic responsibility, public health equity, opportunities for physical activity, and community pride.

### Examples

**Access to Health Facilities:** Identify locations for the expansion of healthcare related facilities on each island.

**Public Shoreline and Water Access:** Ensure public recreational shoreline and water access.

# Mitigate the Impacts of Climate Change

The USVI must adopt land and water use policies that anticipate the impacts of our changing climate and strengthen our ability to meet these challenges.



## Examples

**Resilient Development:** Make sure new construction, renovations, and infrastructure are built to withstand storms, sea-level rise, and other climate impacts.

**Protect Our Trees:** Expand forestry programs to increase native tree planting, maintenance, and preservation practices to help provide shade and access to fruit trees.



## Build Economic Opportunity & Resilience

Land and water use policies will look to diversify the USVI economy and build on the strengths and opportunities specific to the different islands in the Territory.

### Examples

**Opportunity for Everyone:** Prioritize economic policies that expand opportunity and access to capital for residents, local landowners, and small businesses.

**Grow Our Food Economy:** Adopt land use regulations that foster a complete and sustainable system of food production, processing, storage, and service.

# Sustainability and Stewardship

Build infrastructure and provide everyday services to residents and business in an equitable and sustainable manner that serves the needs of current and future residents and visitors, while promoting biodiversity, restoring ecosystems and the environment, and improving public health.



## Examples

**Resilient Power:** Continue to build a more resilient and reliable power grid using microgrids, battery storage, burying utilities or using composite rather than wooden utility poles, etc.

**Water Supply:** Adopt development standards and design infrastructure to treat, store, and conserve water supplies.



# Development, Redevelopment, Restoration, and Conservation

The Comp Plan will establish a broad vision of where development should occur and where it should not occur and how coastal areas and marine waters should be used.

## Examples

**Future Land & Water Management:** Identify areas suitable for different types of development and uses, areas most in need of conservation, and areas that should be targeted for restoration, both on land and water.

**Walkable, Mixed-Use Communities:** Establish zoning and incentives for mixed-use development to create walkable communities close to retail shops and services for daily needs.

# Open House and Virtual Open House



## Open House Format

- 10 “stations” – one for each Formative Issue
- Posters with policies and working strategies
- Staff to answer questions, lead informal conversations

- Feedback: Worksheet or online survey

*Are we on track? What are we missing?*

- **Virtual Open House** at [www.PlanUSVI.com](http://www.PlanUSVI.com)

July 18 – Aug 6

***Tell your friends and family! Anyone who couldn't make it tonight can read all materials and provide their thoughts online.***



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# Enjoy the Open House!

See more materials at ...

[www.PlanUSVI.com](http://www.PlanUSVI.com)