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NOTICE OF INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS FOR TIERED NIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

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On or after September 4, 2023, the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) will submit a request to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) San Juan Field Office for the release of Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds under Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, (PL93-383), as amended, to undertake the following program:

Program: Neighborhood Revitalization

Purpose: The Neighborhood Revitalization Program will support activities such as aesthetic and functional enhancements, preservation of historic sites, increased security, better services for tourists and residents alike, and promotion of private investment. Program options include: (1) the Building Façade and Streetscape Enhancement Program and (2) the Small Business Entrepreneurship Grant and Technical Assistance Program. The goal of the Building Façade and Streetscape Enhancement Program is to increase investment and improve the aesthetic of local communities. While the Small Business Entrepreneurship Grant and Technical Assistance Program will fund recovery grants to small businesses and microenterprises which suffered physical and/or financial losses due to the 2017 hurricanes.

Location: Tiered Environmental Reviews were prepared for St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John, US Virgin Islands for the purpose of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Description: The Building Façade and Streetscape Enhancement Program will provide funding to eligible business buildings, commercial or mixed-use, to repair visible exterior damage and enhance downtown areas, high traffic areas, historic districts, etc. Applicants for this program may use funds for exterior scraping/paint, roof spouting, brick repairs, repair/replace exterior windows and doors, safety improvements, signage on the building, improving the curb appeal of back and side entrances, physical improvements to prominent courtyards (including planters, eating areas, lighting, landscaping, and signage), and installation of directional signage to landmarks/places of interest.

The Small Business Entrepreneurship Grant and Technical Assistance Program (SBETA) is comprised on two components: (1) Small Business Grant and (2) Technical Assistance. Applicants for the business grant option may use funds for advertising, license fees, and accounting expenses. The technical assistance component is designed to support entrepreneurs and existing small businesses to build economic resilience and lessen commerce disruptions due to natural or manmade disasters. Applicants for this program option may use funds for business plan development, financial management, marketing, inventory, and skilled workforce development.

Tier II Site-Specific Reviews will be complete for laws and authorities not addressed in the Tier I Broad Review for each project under this program.

Level of Environmental Review Citation: Proposed projects under the Building Façade and Streetscape Enhancement Program are categorically excluded subject to the Federal laws and authorities cited in 24 CFR 58.5 per 24 CFR 58.35(a)(1). Proposed projects under the SBETA Program are exempt under 24 CFR 58.34 or categorically excluded not subject to the Federal laws and authorities cited in 24 CFR 58.5

Tier II Site-Specific Review: The Tier II Site-Specific Review will cover the following laws and authorities not addressed in the Tier I Broad Review: 24 CFR Part 51 Subpart D; Coastal Barrier Resources Act, as amended by the Coastal Barrier Improvement Act of 1990 [16 USC 3501]; Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 and National Flood Insurance Reform Act of 1994 [42 USC 4001-4128 and 42 USC 5154a]; Clean Air Act, as amended, particularly section 176(c) & (d); 40 CFR Parts 6, 51, 93; Coastal Zone Management Act, sections 307(c) & (d); 24 CFR Part 50.3(i) & 58.5(i)(2); Endangered Species Act of 1973, particularly section 7; 50 CFR Part 402; 24 CFR Part 51 Subpart C; Executive Order 11988, particularly section 2(a); 24 CFR Part 55; National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, particularly sections 106 and 110; 36 CFR Part 800.

Mitigation Measures/Conditions/Permits: During the Tier II Site-Specific Review, maps and a site inspection will be utilized to identify regulations that may require further consultation or testing. Consultation with the Virgin Islands Port Authority, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, DOI-US Fish and Wildlife Services, HUD Office of Environment and Energy, and the US Environmental Protection Agency will be conducted to identify potential concerns and identify mitigation measures to address those concerns. Testing and additional contracted services will be utilized during the Tier II Site-Specific Review to advise consultation with the parties listed above. Mitigation measures and conditions will be developed during the Tier II Site-Specific Review and monitored throughout project execution.

Estimated Project Cost: The total HUD funding requested for the purpose of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program is \$14,032,915.00.

The activities proposed are categorically excluded under HUD regulation 24 CFR Part 58 from the National Environmental Policy Act requirements per 24 CFR 58.35(a)(1). An Environmental Review Record (ERR) documenting the environmental determinations for this project is on file at the VIHFA office in St. Croix at 100 Lagoon Complex, Suite 4 Frederiksted, or in St. Thomas at 3202 Demarara Plaza, Suite 200. The ERR can also be made available for public review either electronically or by US mail. Please submit your request via US mail to VIHFA at 3202 Demarara Plaza, Suite 200, St. Thomas, VI 00802-6647, Attention Ms. Dayna Clendinen, Interim Executive Director/Chief Disaster Recovery Officer or via email to environmental@vihfa.gov. The ERR can also be accessed online at the following website, www.cdbgdr.vihfa.gov.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any individual, group, or agency may submit written comments on the ERR to the VIHFA at, 3202 Demarara Plaza, Suite 200, St. Thomas, VI 00802-6447, Attention Ms. Dayna Clendinen, Interim Executive Director/Chief Disaster Recovery Office, or via email to environmental@vihfa.gov, or online at

www.cdbgdr.vihfa.gov. All comments received by September 1, 2023 will be considered by VIHFA prior to authorizing the submission of a Request for Release of Funds.

ENVIRONMENTAL CERTIFICATION

VIHFA certifies to HUD that Ms. Dayna Clendinen, in her capacity as the Interim Executive Director/Chief Disaster Recovery Officer, consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. HUD's approval of this certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and related laws and authorities and, allows VIHFA to use HUD program funds.

OBJECTIVE TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

HUD will accept objections to its release of funds and the VIHFA's certification for a period of fifteen days following the anticipated submission date or its actual receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if they are on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer of VIHFA; (b) VIHFA has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 58; (c) the grant recipient or other participants in the development process have committed funds, incurred costs or undertaken activities not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by HUD; or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with required procedures (24 CFR Part 58, Sec. 58.76) and shall be addressed to HUD at HUD Caribbean Office, Region VI, 235 Federico Costa Street, Suite 200, Parque Las Americas I Building, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 00918. Due to the ongoing pandemic, comments and objections may be submitted via email to CPD_COVID_19OEE-SJU@hud.gov. Potential objections should contact HUD to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

Sincerely,



Dayna Clendinen
Certifying Officer
Interim Executive Director/Chief Disaster Recovery Officer
Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority