

Featured Articles

Education Master Plan Completed for U.S. Virgin Islands

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By SCN Staff

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS— U.S. Virgin Islands Governor Albert Bryan Jr. recently announced the completion of the education facilities master plan for the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Education.

“Today is a good day as we celebrate a major milestone, especially in the department of education,” said Governor Bryan in a statement.

“It gives me great pride and a real sense of accomplishment to launch our education schools facilities master plan. Education is the main driver in what a Virgin Islander will do for years to come, and we want to make sure we have schools that are not only equipped with the technology to power that, but with an atmosphere of warmth where teachers, students, administrators, and parents can come together and prepare the Virgin Islands children for a very bright future.”

Serving as a framework for future decision-making related to the reinvention of education and educational facilities in St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas, the master plan provides an avenue to improve learning environments for the territory’s 10,000 students.

For the past three years, the Virgin Islands has continued to recover following the catastrophic damage Hurricanes Irma and Maria caused across the territory in 2017, including destruction to multiple schools and educational support facilities. With many of the schools in the Virgin Islands 40 years and older, they are outdated and do not meet today’s educational standards.

The master plan calls for a reduction of facilities from 32 to 18 and a shift to a programming model of grades Pre-K-8 and 9-12 to ensure equity between the islands and the schools. Six schools will be constructed and 12 will receive modernizations and/or expansions, and all learning environments will be updated to support future-ready learning.

DLR Group developed the master plan following a six-month, community-based process to engage government officials, stakeholders, patrons, educational leaders, teachers, students, parents, and industry partners. The firm is partnered with Witt O'Brien's, a leader in crisis and emergency management.

“The completion of the master plan is the first step toward defining how facilities can make a difference in the lives of every learner in the Virgin Islands,” explained DLR Group Principal Pam Loeffelman, FAIA.

“There is tremendous anticipation to see the community’s vision become reality in the coming years, and we look forward to moving on to the next stage of development.”

Funding for school modernizations and new construction outlined in the master plan will be provided through the Federal Emergency Management Agency as defined by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 and will be confirmed in the next six to 12 months.

Following a successful master planning effort, DLR Group has been retained to complete design documents for the first five projects prioritized in the master plan. These bridging documents will directly integrate ideas from the master plan and will be issued as part of the request for proposals for design/build teams.

Design and construction of new and modernized schools will be phased with a target completion date of 2025.