

# The Town's Blueprint

## *A Vision & Code for Historic Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI*

### PROJECT DETAILS

Project Area:	Historic neighborhoods, approx. 239 acres
Client:	The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands
Year Initiated:	2010
Website:	<a href="http://thetownsblueprint.com">thetownsblueprint.com</a>

The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands, with the generous support of the Richard H. Driehaus Charitable Lead Trust, and in coordination with the VI Department of Planning and Natural Resources and the VI Department of Public Works, is sponsoring this planning and Form-Based Code writing effort for Charlotte Amalie and the USVI.

For more information, visit [doverkohl.com](http://doverkohl.com).



The restoration of a neighborhood step street.



Existing



Proposed

Hypothetical view along General Gade with the undergrounding of utilities and infill of a vacant lot.

### The Project

The Town's Blueprint is a special component of the USVI's Zoning and Subdivision Code Update: a pilot project to demonstrate and test the application of a Form-Based Code (FBC) in the historic neighborhoods of Charlotte Amalie. The goal for the planning effort is to create a new FBC Overlay District that can be calibrated and applied in selected areas throughout the Territory. The historic core of Charlotte Amalie is the first "pilot" area to test this approach. This area was selected as the pilot to build upon the investment in transportation and infrastructure improvements underway as a part of the Charlotte Amalie Revitalization Plan (which includes a series of enhancements to celebrate the centennial of the transfer of the islands in 2017), as well as to protect and strengthen the historic building fabric present in the capital city of the United States Virgin Islands. Dover, Kohl & Partners worked together with Hall Planning & Engineering, UrbanAdvisors, Chael, Cooper & Associates, Springline Architects, Aaron Cook, and Eduardo Castillo, as well as hundreds of participants from the Charlotte Amalie community to create the Vision and Code.

### The Process

The first step to creating the Code was to confirm the community's vision for the future; this vision could then be translated into new form-based regulations. The vision and code together, when adopted, will be used to guide future development in Charlotte Amalie. The public process began with stakeholder interviews and meetings in August and November 2010, and peaked with a charrette held December 3 - 9, 2010. Residents, property/business owners, and government staff and officials attended the week's presentations and design sessions, and visited the design studio, where each day's progress was displayed. A set of "Big Ideas" were identified; these concepts formed the purpose and intent of the new Charlotte Amalie District Code.

### Status

The Dover-Kohl team returned to the Territory in March 2011 for additional community meetings, including an interactive Code Workshop, to review an Executive Summary of the vision and a first draft of the Charlotte Amalie District Code. In November 2011, additional meetings were held to review the full Summary Report and second draft of the Form-Based Code. The Territory-wide Zoning and Subdivision Code Update (prepared by Duncan Associates and Rutgers University) is expected to be ready for adoption in 2012. Following approval, individual FBC districts, such as the one prepared for the pilot area of Charlotte Amalie, can be adopted.



# The Vision Shapes the Rules & Directs the Investment



The BIG IDEAS describe the general roadmap for revitalization and regulation in the historic core of Charlotte Amalie. The vision comes first, and the rewriting of the land development laws and budgets for public infrastructure follow that vision. To realize these goals, the vision identifies a series of actions that could be undertaken to mend and improve the neighborhoods, and to enhance the town's waterfront. These include:

## Create walkable, livable streets

The planned redesign of Veterans Drive will have tremendous impact to the appearance and function of the waterfront, and can act as a catalyst for revitalization. When rebuilt, neighborhood streets should have a pedestrian-friendly scale maintaining the best features of the traditional street design. Re-establishing sidewalks and removing obstacles (such as utility poles) will make it easier to walk throughout town. Vehicle sizes and types can be limited on certain streets at certain hours, to increase livability.

## Restore & reoccupy vacant buildings

Complex ownership and heavy regulation have resulted in a large number of vacant buildings, a safety concern as well as an eyesore. To maintain historic integrity, rules and procedures must make it more feasible to rehab buildings and less financially attractive to neglect them.

## Fill in vacant lots to complete the neighborhoods

Infill on vacant lots will spark pride and reinvestment along every street. New buildings will follow standards to ensure they contribute to neighborhood character. In the interim, vacant lots can be utilized for other community purposes, including parking (with landscaping), pocket parks, or community gardens.

## Create high-quality open spaces

Waterfront parking lots can be replaced by parallel or angled parking along Veterans Drive for traffic-calming benefits to lure back pedestrians; this will provide space for wide sidewalks, greens, and outdoor cafes in front of waterfront buildings. The "guts" or drainage ditches that separate each neighborhood can be cleaned, replanted and enhanced to become green walkway connections. The step streets can be restored to be cultural, historic and recreational resources.

## Provide smart parking solutions

Common parking areas (including structures, appropriately "lined" with inhabited spaces and screened from view) should be explored to manage the parking crunch. A parking permit program should be established to give residents and businesses certainty. Common lots can provide efficient parking for neighboring users, relieving constrained parcels.

## THE TOWN'S BLUEPRINT: BIG IDEAS

REAFFIRM & PROTECT THE  
TRADITIONAL WAY OF BUILDING

TRANSFORM THE WATERFRONT  
INTO THE FINEST PUBLIC SPACE  
IN THE CARIBBEAN

CONNECT

MAKE WALKABILITY THE FIRST  
PRIORITY IN DESIGN

CONTROL THE SCALE; SMALL IS  
BEAUTIFUL

BRING TOWN TO LIFE AT NIGHT &  
FOSTER OVERNIGHT STAYS

EMBRACE OUR DIVERSITY &  
IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL